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*ROSE OF THE WORLD.*<sup>1</sup>

BY AGNES AND EGERTON CASTLE.

BOOK II.

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CHAPTER XIX.

LADY ASPASIA and M. Châtelard were seated one on each side of the fireplace, fairly monopolising the benefits of the situation. Although the thought of Sir Arthur, upstairs with his young wife—no doubt coaxing the insolent beauty into a better temper—was no very agreeable one to her, Lady Aspasia, with the good-humoured, material philosophy of her kind, made the best of what fate left her. She toasted her well-formed, well-shod foot at the blaze; found that the old-fashioned winged armchair (with the help of a cushion) was as comfortable as any modern copy if not more so, and that M. Châtelard was undoubtedly an entertaining companion. He had seen curious things on his travels, and he could tell of them with a French spice. By a series of jerks the two drew ever closer together; finally blocking the hearth. Their voices were lowered by imperceptible degrees; their heads inclined towards each other. Lady Aspasia's laugh rang loud and often; and presently, by a tacit agreement in which the conversation gained enormously, each relapsed into the native tongue.

'Upon my word,' said Lady Aspasia to herself; 'I'll send in his name for my royal party.'

M. Châtelard, pouring forth a whispered flow of language, with a pause on the delicate point, and a quiet chuckle after the

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ready listener had had time to seize it and ring her hearty, unreserved tribute of appreciation, was privately making little notes for future publication, with all the traveller's joy of discovery. 'Et il y en a encore qui croient que les Anglaises sont guindées ! Un esprit tout Rabelaisien—cette dame ! Allons, l'âge Victorien est bien mort et enterré !'

Miss Aspasia, who some time back had been told, with a flap of Lady Aspasia's hand, 'not to listen, little girl,' sat, highly disapproving, at the further end of the room. Bethune, whose existence the great lady now elected to ignore, had taken a chair at a little distance from the girl. A monosyllabic conversation began between them and dropped. He asked her for some music, and she tartly refused with a reproachful look. She wondered at him. Did he not know her aunt's head was bad ? He didn't know ? Well, he might have seen that she was ill ! To this he made no answer, and thereafter they spoke no more. The man had a talent for taciturnity, but the effort of Baby's silence seemed to bristle. She sat very erect. Her mouth pursed, her nostrils dilated, her eyes widely opened, her arched eyebrows more arched than ever. The tittering, the whispering, the laughter, the meaning wriggles of the two backs as they leant towards each other before the hearth, irritated her beyond endurance.

'M. Châtelard,' she suddenly cried, in fluent French, with her *enfant terrible* directness, 'do tell me—I don't want to be rude ; but why do you cut your hair so close to your head ? Isn't it very cold this weather ?'

'Alas, Mademoiselle,' said he, turning round ; his alertness of courtesy was ingrain ; 'I do not dare to show to the world that my head is quite white.'

'You think it looks better pink ?' said Baby, innocently.

'Pink !' said M. Châtelard a little disconcerted, passing his hand over his cropped pate. 'Is it possible ?' Then, sparkling : 'Pink ? I had no idea that Lady Melbury had so made me blush !'

'Oh, blush !' cried Lady Aspasia, her momentary displeasure with the pert schoolgirl lost in a yell of delight at M. Châtelard's readiness ; 'It's well that *my* blushing days are over !'

'Oh, Milady !' And they put their heads together again.

Young Aspasia pinched in her rosy lips so tight that they made the most absurd button of a mouth ever seen. Bethune, who had listened with immovable gravity to this sally, betraying indeed no sign of having heard it, save for the rolling of an icy eye towards

M. Châtelard, now let his glance rest upon her. The hard muscles of his face began to soften.

He had been slowly making up his mind during the whole of the evening, and now he had decided. He would leave the manor-house on the morrow, and cut himself once and for ever apart from its inmates. But, the devil was in it that, in the midst of the most intolerable mental trouble he had ever endured, he should have once and again this absurd unreasonable feeling that if he were to carry away with him this pretty Aspasia, this fluffy, pouting, pert; bird-like thing, it would be sweet! Something like the blessedness of a peep of blue in a sky of lurid clouds, a ray of sunshine across a barren moor, a snowdrop in bleak winter. The feeling had no sense in it. He was a prey to as strong a passion as ever possessed a man; and he not only despised himself, hated himself for his passion, but was conscious that by the object of it he was held a thing of scorn. More than this, she, who thus in spite of reason filled his thoughts, was suffering, and he could not lift a finger to help her. The whole source of her suffering was only vaguely understood by him; but he knew that her husband's presence had nearly driven her to desperation. It was acute torture to him now to think of Sir Arthur in his wife's room; and yet . . . haunted by these unworthy degrading thoughts of one who should have been twice sacred to him, he found himself longing to take Aspasia to his breast—bright-eyed Aspasia, pecking, twittering, fluttering like an angry dove, withal so soft, so warm, so true! His inconsequent heart seemed to cry out for the comfort of her.

Sir Arthur opened the door and looked in.

'Pray, pray,' said he, inserting an arm, after his head, to wave back the confidential couple who with a great scraping of chairs had risen to their feet, 'do not let me disturb anyone. I am only looking for Aspasia.'

'Oh Lord!' said Aspasia under her voice, alarm springing to her eyes. 'I'm here, Runkle.'

'Can you spare me a few minutes' private conversation, my dear Aspasia?'

His tone was very solemn. He was conscious of the hush that had fallen upon the room, conscious of the perturbed looks that were fixed upon him, conscious of his own countenance of trouble. But it was not without a gloomy self-approval that, given circumstances the most woeful that could perhaps be imagined, he realised there were few who could negotiate them like himself.

Aspasia went reluctantly to her uncle's summons. Her heart was heavy with anxiety concerning Rosamond. In her constitutional distrust of whatever course of action Sir Arthur might take it into his head to adopt, she had an oppressive sensation that most of the responsibility of affairs rested upon her own young shoulders.

'Lord,' thought the girl to herself, as her lagging feet took her across the drawing-room; 'if one could only just shut up Runkle in a box for six months, there might be some hope of things settling down.'

Sir Arthur beckoned her towards the little study where, through the half-opened door, a ruddy light showed that the room had now been made ready for the smokers. His air of portentous gloom so exasperated Baby that she had to relieve her feelings by childish kicks at the mats in the hall as she passed.

'I presume that we shall be undisturbed here for the present,' said Sir Arthur. He pushed open the door and started back with an irritated exclamation: 'Confound that fellow, he's like a night moth!'

Between the fire and the lamplight, Muhammed Saif-u-din stood facing them. It seemed as if he had been pacing the little space, and had wheeled round at the sound of their approach. Baby's heart gave a wild throb, and then stood still. The Indian had certainly been very restless all the evening. Sir Arthur Gerardine's arrival seemed to have excited him in a singular manner, and there could be no mistaking now the straight, vindictive look that the secretary fixed upon his master. She was minded of a splendid black panther she had seen at an Indian village fair, not so very long ago.—The beast had been padding the narrow limits of its cage backwards and forwards until she had drawn close to admire it, when it had stopped and fixed her with its eyes—just such a gaze (she told herself, shivering) as that which Muhammed fixed on Sir Arthur; a gaze as concentrated as unfathomably savage. 'Him very bad beast,' had said the showman, grinning at her.—'Him dreaming of drinking Missie Sahib's blood.'

Sir Arthur's grating voice rang out angrily in a brief phrase of Hindustani. The Pathan unfolded his arms, made a gesture with one hand, and left the room without speaking. In that gesture Baby nervously read the meaning: I can bide my time.

'Runkle,' she cried, catching her breath, 'how could you bring that dreadful man over from India? I'm sure it's not safe. Even



Major Bethune—and he's lived all his life among them, you know—thinks he's mysterious. Oh, do, do be careful !'

'Aspasia,' said Sir Arthur severely, 'I am surprised at you. I have other matters, matters of far other moment on my mind, I can tell you. What nonsense is this? The fellow there doesn't know his place, I grant you. I've just told him so. You saw how he quailed. He's devoured with curiosity, that's all. And, indeed,' Sir Arthur sighed, 'there are strange things taking place in this house. He may well be curious.'

'Oh, Runkle, I don't think it's that; he's not the ordinary type of Indian, I'm convinced. He's got some purpose here.'

'Pooh, nonsense, my dear Aspasia! Purpose? Ridiculous! I should hope I know how to deal with the creatures by this time. Don't you begin this sort of nerve business, too—I shall begin to think,' said poor Sir Arthur, running a distracted hand through his grey curls, 'that there's something about this pestilent place that's driving everybody crazy.' Again he caught himself up with a deep sigh on the last word. 'I shall give Master Muhammed his lesson to-morrow. I don't require to be taught how to manage the cattle—under the heel, my dear, under the heel! To-night—' He paused. 'Aspasia,' he lowered his voice: 'I am addressing you in the utmost confidence, relying upon your good sense and judgment. Listen to me calmly and answer me with truth absolute. Have you ever noticed any symptom in your poor aunt . . . ?'

He had leant forward to drop these words mysteriously into her ear; now he straightened himself, shook his head, and tapped his forehead.

'Uncle Arthur . . . !' gasped the girl, her pretty round face suddenly pinched and small, her eyes abnormally large. What, indeed, were such trivial speculations as a Pathan's possible yearning for Sir Arthur's blood to so hideous a suggestion as this? Here was her own hidden terror of all these weeks voiced calmly, judiciously; in acknowledgment of, almost in resignation to, an accomplished fact.

'You can't mean——' she stammered.

'My dear,' said Sir Arthur, with melancholy triumph, 'I am in very serious anxiety. Your aunt's manner to-night, the things she has said to me just now, her actions, her looks—I can only explain them, heartrending as it is to me to have to admit it, in one way.'

'Poor Aunt has got neurasthenia,' faltered the unhappy Baby.

'My dear Aspasia,' said Sir Arthur; 'may it be only that! I pray it may be only that. But the affair is too serious. I shall have the best professional advice to-morrow, the first mental specialist in England.'

'What!' screamed Aspasia, suddenly scarlet to the roots of her hair; 'you're never going to get a horrid mad doctor for poor darling Aunt Rosamond?'

'My dear Aspasia!' ejaculated he, beating down the sound of her crude words with his hands. 'It is my duty, Aspasia, to get the best advice, the best treatment, at the earliest possible opportunity. And it is your duty,' he said, fixing his eyes sternly upon her, 'to tell me everything that can conduce to a better knowledge of her state.'

Rivulets of cold water ran down Aspasia's back. She felt a sudden, awful premonition of relentless fate closing about her; of the cruelty of human beings to each other; something of the terror of the ignorant patient in the surgical ward.

'What would they want to do with Aunt Rosamond?' she faltered.

Sir Arthur shook his head again. 'Sometimes the only chance is a temporary retreat—temporary, we must hope and trust.'

'You mean,' she shrieked, and advanced on him with her small fists clenched; 'shut up Aunt Rosamond, shut her up——. Never! You wicked, horrible old fool! What should you shut her up for? She's not mad. She's no more mad than I am. Why should you call her mad, just because she turned sick at the sight of you all guzzling dinner?'

'Hush, hush!' he cried.

'I don't care who hears me,' she retorted, in the same high tones of sobbing indignation. 'You *were* guzzling. Your nasty old Lady Aspasia positively gobbled, and so did that disgusting Frenchman with the pink head. I suppose she's mad because she told you the truth for once, upstairs? I'm glad. If someone had told you the truth before, it would have been better for everybody.'

Upon which cryptic utterance she flung herself from the room, but popped in her head again for a last shot:

'Of course, if the doctor asks me why poor Aunt ever married you, I shan't quite know what to say—it's the only queer symptom she's ever shown, to my knowledge.'

Sir Arthur sank into the armchair, speechless. Presently he

sought for his handkerchief, and, with an exhausted hand, passed it across his beaded forehead. The ring of Lady Aspasia's laugh floated across the hall through the door which the girl had left ajar. The sound of that cheery, heart-whole mirth, the thought of that comfortable, healthy, everyday, high-born woman heightened the sense of his own utter dejection. Had he not made an irremediable mistake after all?

Meanwhile Aspasia, with an unreasoning sense that she could not too soon be at Rosamond's side to protect her, took the oak stairs at a canter, pausing merely at the first landing to choke down the sobs with which her breast was bursting.

'I only hope and trust Muhammed will be quick about it, and stick Runkle to-night,' she said to herself, mopping her eyes fiercely, her pocket-handkerchief tightly rolled into a ball.

At her aunt's door she met Jani, who checked the headlong approach with brown finger on lip and long-drawn: 'Hush!'

In the drawing-room Raymond Bethune, a bad third, heard the ring of Aspasia's voice and the hammer of her flying heels on the stairs, and realised, with keen disappointment, that she was not coming back. He had been longing for the instant of her return for a twofold reason—his devouring anxiety concerning Lady Gerardine, and the desire to exchange a few last quiet parting words with the girl herself, since he intended to walk out of the Old Ancient House, unobtrusively, with the coming day.

As the patter of little feet died away, however, he rose stiffly from his neglected corner, and, approaching the jocular pair by the fireside, looked down at them with a sort of dignified awkwardness until they would vouchsafe some consciousness of his approach.

The Frenchman, after struggling for a minute between his courtesy to the lady, who went on pouring a country-house story into his ear, and what was due to the patiently waiting gentleman, at last laid a warning finger on Lady Aspasia's wrist.

'Je crois que Monsieur désire nous parler,' he said, engagingly.

'Oh,' cried the mistress of Melbury Towers, and gave an insolent half-turn of her smooth head, a half-twist of her handsome eyes in the direction of Bethune, as an indication that he might say his say and have done with it.

'I thought I'd bid you good-night,' said the man stolidly.

'Comment, mon cher major,' cried the polite Châtelard, springing to his feet, 'already?'

'I'm going in the morning,' went on Bethune, in the same level tones; 'I've got to pack.' His words and glance were fixed on the indifferent lady. 'I think you were kind enough to say something about my coming to Melbury Towers for Christmas. I am sorry I can't accept.'

Lady Aspasia's eyebrows were raised a fraction of a line.

'So sorry,' she said cheerfully. 'I'm sure Sir Arthur would have liked to see more of you.'

She did not offer him her hand, or turn her glance upon him. He bowed in the direction of her pronounced profile, and turned to find himself effusively seized by the globe-trotter.

'Comment, cher major,' cried the latter in tones of unaffected disappointment; 'you leave to-morrow? And I who had so much pleasure in the renewing of our acquaintance. It is not possible we part thus.'

'Que diable,' the psychologist was saying to himself, 'c'est comme ça que l'on arrange ces petites affaires-là en Angleterre? Le mari arrive, vous trouve en tête-à-tête, et l'amant part. Voilà tout. C'est inouï! Je m'attendais, je l'avoue, à un dénouement plus palpitant. Mais malgré tout . . . ' Bethune had gone, without a word. The door was closed. M. Châtelard was resuming his seat: 'N'y-a-t'il pas, quand même, quelque chose de fort intéressant dans cette simple solution?—oui, un caractère exclusivement Britannique dans cette simplicité; comme qui dirait un vestige, au milieu du désordre même, de la vertu puritaine qui tenait si fort aux apparences, de cette horreur du shocking si profondément enracinée dans l'Anglo-Saxon?'

As he raised his musing eye, he found Lady Aspasia's bright grey orb fixed upon him with a world of meaning.

## CHAPTER XX.

'HUSH!' said Jani, 'Missie Sahib ill. Must not be disturbed.'

'Is she in bed?' whispered Aspasia. 'Don't be a stupid, Jani. I shan't do her any harm.'

With her hand on the door handle, Jani shook her head till the monstrous gold ear-rings waggled against her cheeks.

'Missie Sahib, no more disturbed to-night,' she repeated emphatically. Her opaque eyes were fixed with triumphant resentment upon Aspasia's countenance. Aspasia, the off-hand young

lady, who flouted old Jani's vested right, who had taken upon herself to do Lady Gerardine's hair this very night, must learn that her presence was not always desirable.

'Who is there?' cried Rosamond's voice, high and strained, from within. 'I can see no one. Jani, you must let no one in.'

'There, missie,' said the old woman.

Aspasia pushed the claw-like hand ruthlessly from the door knob.

'It is I, Aunt Rosamond,' said she, tapping the panels with soft consolatory palms. 'You'll let me in, darling, won't you? I'll do police, too, never fear, and better than Jani.'

'Oh, you! Come in,' bade the voice within, faintly, but with an unmistakable accent of relief.

Aspasia made a face at Jani, but passed in with something less than her usual flounce. Lady Gerardine was seated before the fire in her white dressing-gown, her arms hanging, her hair loose about her. Jani had evidently been interrupted in the act of brushing by the sound of the approaching footsteps, and had flown to her sentry post.

'Stay outside, Jani. Lock the door, Baby.'

Lady Gerardine just turned her head sufficiently to give these orders, then relapsed into her brooding attitude, her eyes hard, dry, encircled, fixed unseeingly upon the fire, her face livid, save for the burning spot on either cheekbone. Aspasia, aghast, stopped a second to survey her.

'She does look very ill,' she thought, hopelessly. 'Worse than ill.' And her heart contracted.

'Darling,' she said, approaching timidly, 'just let me plait this dear hair, and then you must get to bed.'

'I wish it were shrivelled on my head!' said Lady Gerardine, staring before her, and sending out her words, it seemed, as aimlessly as her glance. 'It is accursed.'

'Aunt Rosamond, what are you saying!'

'Harry loved it. It was his hair, his golden hair, and that other man has put his horrible touch upon it.'

'There's no doubt of it,' said Baby to herself, as with the gentlest of touches she gathered the long strands together, 'though I'll never admit it to anyone; darling Aunt Rosamond is mad. Those dreadful letters, the poor dead husband, and the horrid old living one have driven her mad between them! They shan't shut her up, though, not while I live, not while I can fight.'

The child had no fear in her heart for herself. How could

anyone, she thought with a great gush of compassion, have fear of this poor, desolate, beautiful creature? She finished the plait, while the figure before her maintained its sinister immobility. Then she leaned forward and slipped her arms round it in a close embrace.

'My angel, how cold you are! Only your cheeks are hot—hot.'

'Don't kiss me,' said Lady Gerardine. 'You don't know what defilement you are holding.'

'Dear Aunt, come to bed.'

'I was his, his consecrate—body and soul, and I gave myself to another.'

'Oh, Aunt Rosamond,' cried the girl, with a sudden upspringing of tears, as a glimmering realisation of the other's anguished mind broke upon her. 'He is a happy spirit. He understands.'

'It is you who cannot understand,' angrily answered the woman. 'Even in life he wrote: "my flesh rebels against the thought." It was the worst sting of death to him. And I never knew. Now I have lost him, I am lost.'

Baby took the nerveless hands in hers, and chafed them while her tears rolled slowly.

'Pray to God, dearest,' she whispered. 'He will help you.'

Rosamond drew away her hand with a great cry.

'God? There is no God!'

'Oh, aunt!'

'Yes—there is, there is—a God of unsparing justice. Only a God could be so merciless and so just. It is just, it is just. I have sinned irremediably. I am punished for ever. What can you—you child, you child, what can you know of my sin?'

'I know this,' cried Baby, kneeling down and gathering the cowering form to her strong embrace; 'that you are ill, that you don't know what you're saying. But God is mercy,' sobbed Aspasia, very reverently—she was shy of her religion, and spoke low, even amid her tears; 'I know that God is mercy, and that those who are with Him must be merciful too.'

'Do you cry for me?' said Lady Gerardine, a sort of wonder in her weary tones, as the wet cheeks were pressed against her face. 'I cannot cry for myself. I am beyond tears.'

With this, she suffered herself to be helped to rise, and made a feeble movement towards the bed. But at the sound of a closing door beneath, of steps on the stairs, she started violently and clutched the girl's arm.

'You will not let anybody in. . . . Nobody must come into my room—Aspasia—Aspasia!'

'No, no! The door is locked. Darling, don't be so frightened; how your teeth chatter! Aunt, I promise you shall be left in peace. I will watch. Can't you trust me? They'd better not!' she added convincingly, if vaguely.

The long convulsive shudders continued even after Baby had coaxed her to bed, and piled the bedclothes over her. She sat a long while by the sick woman, still rubbing the bloodless fingers, speaking soothingly from time to time. But Rosamond herself spoke no more.

At last silence fell upon the Old Ancient House. Steps ceased to resound along the echoing oak. Doors were definitely closed; even Lady Aspasia's pervading voice seemed to be hushed for the night. Then Lady Gerardine suddenly turned to her niece with something of her old gentle look:

'Go to bed, my child,' she said. 'Sleep, at least you while you can. Your little face looks tired!'

'I'll sleep here with you, if you'll have me,' said Aspasia, kissing the hand she held.

'No, no,' said the other. 'I must be alone. I shall have Jani, she will watch. Good-night.'

Poor healthy Baby was in truth ready to tumble over with fatigue, and had found her head, to her own fierce displeasure, nodding portentously from time to time. She went forth with the uncertain gait of the sleep-drunken, but paused at the door to give Jani minute and repeated instructions, which the latter, vividly alert, received with undisguised scorn. With much satisfaction the ayah re-entered her mistress' room, and locked the door upon her drowsy rival.

## CHAPTER XXI.

ASPASIA awoke from a heavy dreamless sleep with a sense of panic. Her heart was beating violently. She sat up in bed, listening eagerly, through the hammering of her pulses.

It is the nature of such old haunted places as Saltwoods that they impress you with their stillness by day and their stirring by night. Then the old boards creak as if to the tread of forgotten steps; old echoes answer to voices long silent; there is a rustle down the narrow passages as of garments the very texture of which is



forgotten ; there are sighs in the night airs, and little cold blasts wandering round corners, even on the stillest night. You tell yourself that it is the crumbling brick and wood work setting ever a little more towards destruction ; but it seems rather as if the years-laden habitation had acquired a sentient being of its own ; that when, like the aged, it lies wakeful in the night, the memories of the past come back to it ; that it laments, with sighs, lost life, lost mirth, lost dignity.

But Baby would at no time have had, in her practical young mind, room for such fancies as these ; and now, the very real well-grounded fears which were strong upon her lent every stealthy creak about her a hideous material significance, every sighing breath the echo of a present tragedy.

Supposing Muhammed were really to creep into the Runkle's room—Sir Arthur might not have locked his door. It is all very well, in a fit of rage, to wish an irritating relative disposed of ; it is a very different thing to wake in the middle of the night and think of the murderer at his work. Poor old Runkle . . . ! Or, suppose Lady Gerardine were to do herself a mischief, were to . . . there are ideas to which one cannot bear to give concrete shape, even in one's own imagination.

The girl lit a candle, sprang out of bed, and huddled on a dressing-gown. How foolish, how selfish, how wicked she had been to leave the fevered woman alone with Jani—Jani, the most helpless and unreasoning of human beings !

The old house might have been in league with the evil passions it housed that night, so loudly did it seem to protest against Aspasia's interference.

Heard anyone ever door so groan on its hinges, ever boards so complain under tread of light foot ? What menacing shadows leapt from every corner ! It was enough to scare any less courageous heart from its purpose. But on went Baby, down the little stairs, past Lady Aspasia's door (the creature snored—it was quite what Baby expected of her) ; round the corner of the passage, past Sir Arthur's little room. What a dead silence in there ! She was afraid to listen to the suggestion, and scurried by, past M. Châtelard's room. Her aunt's door at last in sight. Baby stopped with a great start, her heart in her mouth, the candle almost dropping from her grasp—what was that black thing lying at such sinister length across the threshold ? A heap of clothes ? . . . Jani ? No—diminutive Jani could never spread to such bulk. Then what ?

The thing moved slowly, reared itself to its knees, turned a wild black head, a wild black-bearded face, fierce eyes, towards Aspasia; then rose, with a spring.

Aspasia, in her mind, flung the light from her and ran into the darkness, shrieking: 'The Panther, the Panther!' But Aspasia, in the flesh, stood rooted to the spot, in a paralysis of terror, unable to move a muscle.

The thing came close to her on its noiseless feet. And she saw that the panther was Muhammed. This was no surprise; she had known it.

But, under his dishevelled locks, from out of the barbaric wings of his beard, the savage being's face was gazing upon her—as it gradually filtered to her panic-stricken mind—with no sort of savageness; rather, indeed, a gentle, a pathetic anxiety.

'Miss Cuninghame . . .' said the Pathan.

To her bewildered ears it was the voice of no Pathan that spoke, but the high-bred accents of an English gentleman. The girl rubbed her eyes with her left hand. ('Wake up, Aspasia, wake up. You are still asleep, and in the middle of some ridiculous dream!')

'Miss Cuninghame,' pursued the dream-creature that was panther and Pathan, and yet looked and spoke like one of her own sober kin; 'are you going to her?'

'I was going,' answered the girl, abandoning herself to her dream. Then she began suddenly to tremble, and with knees giving way beneath her, advanced uncertainly towards the door, all her energies bent on reaching safety within. But he, with an outflung gesture of prayer, cried to her, in that low English voice that was so amazing, yet which, in spite of its incongruity, soothed her frantic fear.

'In pity, stop one second. Do you hear how she is crying within? Tell me, what is her trouble?' And, as Baby fell from amazement to amazement, as even in dreams one falls, and could find no thought, much less words for answer, he went on in his pleading undertone: 'Is the old man not good to her? Oh, do not stop to wonder why I should ask you! Answer me, in the name of God, as one fellow-creature to another: Whom, or what, is she mourning for?'

Aspasia saw how, between the sweep of his moustache and the great fans of his beard, the man's lips quivered as he spoke: she felt his haggard eyes imploring, compelling; and she made

answer, as she was bidden, 'as one fellow-creature to another,' with a solemnity which she herself was scarce aware of:

'She is mourning for her dead husband.'

When she had spoken, Baby had a vision so swift that she had hardly time to seize it, of Muhammed's eyes lightening upon her with an extraordinary illumination. The next instant he had dropped his lids. Then he turned and, running, left her; and she heard the crazy boards creak, the stairs groan under his flying unshod feet.

Utter chaos possessed her thoughts as she turned the handle of the locked door and gently knocked, calling upon Jani; the fantastic terrors of her inexplicable experience, and the sounds of Rosamond's moans and sobs within driving her to urgency. As still in a sort of nightmare she found herself repeating her own phrase to the Pathan, and an odd speech of her aunt's, as if in answer to it: 'She is mourning for her dead husband. . . . He is not really dead, Baby. . . .'

Here an idea so extraordinary, so utterly impossible, suddenly tapped at her brain that, added to all the rest, a new fear of her own self came upon her.

'I think I am going mad, too,' said the poor child to herself. 'Jani, Jani,' she cried louder, 'let me in!'

And Jani, hearing, did so—this time it seemed, with alacrity.

The candles on Lady Gerardine's dressing-table had been lit, and the protrait on the panel was in full illumination.

Rosamond was crouching in bed, her head on her knees, her hair in long strands about her. She did not move upon Aspasia's entrance; she did not seem to have heard it. Now and again a moan escaped her.

'Why did you not call me?' cried the girl, turning angrily upon Jani.

The ayah shook her head, her face was wrinkled into a thousand lines of dismay. She made a helpless gesture with both hands,

'Has she been like that all night?' asked Aspasia.

'All night,' answered Jani, adding apologetically: 'quieter now.'

'Quiet!' echoed Baby.

Quiet! It was indeed this very quietude of suffering that terrified her. From such an extremity of pain she felt herself separated by all her own young vitality as from death itself. Here the science of her heart failed her. This inert woman, moaning like a suffering animal, seemed something horribly different from

her beautiful aunt. Baby dared not touch her; she could not even find a word for her.

'Speak to her, you, Jani,' she whispered.

Jani obediently approached the bed and, bending towards her mistress, poured forth a flood of Hindustani. Failing to make an impression, she seized the clasped hands in her claw-like grip and shook them.

Then Rosamond raised her head and turned a vacant look. Her face was drawn beyond recognition; Baby saw a slow tear gather and roll down into the open mouth. Anything more forlorn, more hopeless, the girl thought she had never beheld. As the golden head drooped once more into its broken attitude, Baby, her own tears springing scalding to her eyes, turned determinedly to Jani:

'I will get old Mary,' she cried; and, seizing her candle again, pattered from the room, all her previous terrors swallowed up in the single huge anxiety. Instinctively Aspasia felt that if Lady Gerardine's reason, nay, her life itself, were to be saved, help must be forthcoming. And the only help she could think of was that of the mystic sorrow-experienced old servant of the family.

Old Mary, whose spirit seemed already a dweller of those regions where from the point of view of the eternal nothing finite can surprise, was soon ready at Aspasia's summons.

'Yes, Miss Cuningham, I'll come. Eh, the poor lady! Don't you fret yourself, miss, she's in God's hands.'

The very sight of her, so promptly robed in her everyday black with the white cap tied under her chin, and the familiar little shawl over her shoulders, was enough to inspire confidence. Baby's tremors were calming down into hopefulness when they entered Lady Gerardine's room together.

'Eh, the poor lady,' cried old Mary again, after one glance at the bed. Then she approached, and took her mistress' hands into hers: 'My Lady,' she said, 'what ails you?'

If anything could have called Rosamond back from her deep slough of despond it was this appellation from lips that had hitherto so sweetly acknowledged her only as widow. The voice and words pierced to her brain. She reared her head quickly.

'Why do you call me that?'

'My Lady!'

The arrival of Sir Arthur Gerardine had made a distinct impression upon the housekeeper's half-dreaming mind. Lady Gerardine

wrenched her hands from the withered clasp, and clapped them over her ears.

'My Lady! my Lady!' she cried wildly, 'I am not Lady Gerardine, I never was Lady Gerardine; I am Mrs. English, Mrs. English. Don't you know it?—you of all women!'

'Ma'am!' ejaculated old Mary, while Aspasia nipped her arm, with warning fingers.

'Oh, Mary,' wailed Rosamond, and broke into a storm of sobs, 'do you think he will ever understand, do you think he will ever forgive me? Oh, Mary, you who have felt his presence here, ask him—ask him if he will forgive me!'

Now Mary hardly needed Aspasia's agitated whispers; she had understood. Her blue eyes became illumined.

'In God's heaven,' she said solemnly, 'where dwell the happy spirits who have entered into life, all is peace and understanding—there is no need to forgive. Eh, Ma'am,' she went on, while Rosamond stifled her sobs to hang upon her words, 'do you think these poor things of earth can hurt those that have gone before? In heaven there is no marriage or giving in marriage!'

A moment Rosamond stared with blazing eyes; then she struck at the woman with both hands.

'How dare you!' she cried hoarsely. 'How dare you! Out of my sight! I want none of your God who can make such cruel laws, none of your heaven that can hold such coldness. Oh, Harry, Harry, Harry! Somewhere you are. Hear me—come to me. Come!'

Fiercely, as if madness were indeed upon her, she flung her glance from one to the other of the helpless watchers.

'I must see him! Send old Mary away, she is keeping him from me. Send her away. Harry, Harry, come to me. Tell me you forgive me. . . . Jani, your people can raise the dead, they say. Call him back to me. By your gods or your devils call his spirit to me. Jani, will you let your child die and not help her?'

The fluent Hindustani of her childhood rushed back to her lips. Aspasia, after having huddled old Mary out of sight, stood, feeling again as if one hideous dream had been succeeded by another still more hideous; feeling, while the unknown cry rang out, and the dear voice grew hoarse and feeble, more abjectly useless herself than in her teeming energy she could ever have thought possible. All at once the ayah, who had listened at first bewildered, then with an air of darkling attention, suddenly interrupted the failing accents of her mistress by a few harsh words.

Rosamond fell back upon her pillows with a sigh of exhaustion. The Hindoo turned, and went stealthily from the room, and Aspasia sank into a chair; her limbs would no longer support her.

Rosamond lay very still, almost like death the girl thought, her eyelids only half closed over her dulled eyes. Never had minutes seemed so interminable; never silence so charged with boding sounds, as during this span of expectation. Never would Aspasia know whether it were hours or minutes that she sat, expecting she knew not what.

At length the shuffling tread of the ayah sounded without the door, and Jani entered. She had thrown a long white veil over her head, and between her hands she held the chafing-dish in which she was wont to cook her own food. The glimmer of the hot charcoal shone fitfully on her dark intent face. A thrill of superstitious terror ran through Aspasia.

'Jani,' she cried, catching at the woman's veil, 'what are you going to do?' She thought the black eyes were lit with an evil spark as they looked back at her:

'Do my Missie Sahib's will,' whispered Jani.

Baby gave a shivering cry.

'Oh—but, Jani, no one can call back the dead!'

Jani was crouching before the hearth. Without replying, she set her little tripod, and balanced the earthen pan on the top of it. In this lay divers herbs and other substances unknown to the watcher. A fine blue fume, with an aromatic odour, began to rise in the room.

Suddenly Jani looked up from her manipulations and spoke again. It was a belated answer to the girl's expostulation.

'Who knows,' said she, in her slow difficult English, 'where the spirits dwell, or how close they live to us? I will pray my gods! And you, Missie Sahib, pray yours, pray hard that she may have her wish.'

The aromatic steam rose and circled. Jani drew a bag from her bosom and began to shake its contents over the pan.

'See, missie, see,' she went on, her eyes fixed, 'this is the good medicine. Behold, Missie Sahib shall dream, and in her dream, she shall be happy.' She folded her hands, rocked herself backwards and forwards, low croonings and mutterings escaping from her lips. Now, like her who soothes a babe to rest, now with a passionate hypnotic fervour as before one of her own world-old shrines. Once she called sharply to Aspasia again:

'Pray, pray!'

Then Aspasia folded her hands, and obediently began to pray. Her first thought was to plead that she and her aunt be protected against what evil might be called into being by these unholy Eastern doings. She heard Rosamond turn in the bed, and saw dreamily, through the floating mists, that she was lying with her eyes fixed on the burning charcoal. Then the girl's thoughts began to wander. She would find herself earnestly petitioning for something, wanting something; and suddenly become aware that she knew not what it was. From where she sat the illumined portrait of Harry English looked down upon her: as once before in the dusk, it now, through the vapours, began to assume airs of life; seemed to smile, to frown. The lips quivered; then, she told herself they spoke; the very words were ringing in her ears.

'In God's name, tell me, who is she mourning for?' It was no longer a picture, it was a living presence. Baby's eyelids drooped; her ideas grew less and less coherent. Finally it was the merest wisps of consciousness that floated through her brain. The old house seemed to hold its breath as in expectation. The stillness seemed to become palpable.

Presently, through her stupor, she felt herself called by a moaning voice and made painful clutches towards consciousness. She knew that Rosamond wanted her and struggled bravely in spirit to break the bonds that held the body.

'Oh,' pleaded the voice, 'he is dead indeed, and it is I who have made him dead: Harry—Harry!'

All at once Aspasia found herself awake—a blast of cold air had rushed into the drowsy secret atmosphere. The door had been flung open and one had entered—a man who came with quick clean tread, whose face was pale, as if indeed risen from the dead, but whose eyes shone with a wonderful light of life.

The woman in the bed reared herself up with outflung arms, and, as he who entered went straight to her, she cast herself upon his breast with a great cry.

'Oh, Harry, Harry, Harry!'

Such a cry had the walls of the manor-house surely never held before. It might have been the voice of all the anguish and all the ecstasies it had known these centuries. It rang round the old walls; every echo took it up and answered it, as if they had been waiting for it.

*(To be continued.)*



*THE NOBLE LADY'S TALE.<sup>1</sup>*

(Circa 1790.)

## I.

' We moved with pensive paces,  
 I and he,  
 And bent our faded faces  
 Wistfully,  
 For something troubled him, and troubled me.

' The lanthorn feebly lightened  
 Our grey hall,  
 Where ancient brands had brightened  
 Hearth and wall,  
 And shapes long vanished whither vanish all.

" O why, Love, nightly, daily,"  
 I had said,  
 " Dost sigh, and smile so palely,  
 As if shed  
 Were all Life's blossoms, all its dear things dead?"

" Since silence sets thee grieving,"  
 He replied,  
 " And I abhor deceiving  
 One so tried,  
 Why, Love, I'll speak, ere time us twain divide."

' He held me, I remember,  
 Just as when  
 Our life was June—September  
 Though 'twas then;  
 And we walked on, until he spoke again:

" Susie, an Irish mummer,  
 Loud-acclaimed  
 Through the gay London summer  
 Was I;—named  
 A master in my art, who would be famed.

<sup>1</sup> Copyright, 1905, by Thomas Hardy, in the United States of America.

## THE NOBLE LADY'S TALE.

' " But lo, there beamed before me  
Lady Su :  
God's altar-vow she swore me  
When none knew,  
And for her sake I bade the sock adieu.

' " My Lord your father's pardon  
Thus I won ;  
He let his heart unhardened  
Towards his son,  
And honourably condoned what we had done ;

' " But said—recall you, dearest ?—  
*As for Su,*  
*I'd see her—ay, though nearest*  
*Now to you—*  
*Sooner entombed than in a stage purlieu !*

' " Just so.—And here he housed us,  
In this nook,  
Where Love like balm has drowsed us :  
Robin, rook,  
Our chief familiars, next to string and book.

' " Our days here, peace-enshrouded,  
Followed strange  
The old stage-joyance, crowded,  
Rich in range ;  
But never did my soul desire a change,

' " Till now, the far uncertain  
Voice of yore  
Calls—calls me to the curtain ;  
There once more,  
But *once*, to tread the boards I trod before.

' " A night—the last and single  
Ere I die—  
To face the lights, to mingle  
As did I  
Once in the game, and rivet every eye !"

'Such was his wish. He feared it,  
Feared it though  
Rare memories so endeared it.  
I, also,  
Feared it still more : its outcome who could know !

"Alas, my Love," said I then,  
"Since it be  
A wish so mastering, why, then  
E'en go ye !—  
Despite your pledge to father and to me." . . .

'Twas fixed ; no more was spoken  
Thereupon ;  
Our silences were broken  
Only on  
The petty items of his needs while gone.

'Farewell he bade me, pleading  
That it meant  
So little, thus conceding  
To his bent ;  
And then, as one constrained to go, he went.

'Thwart thoughts I let deride me,  
As, 'twere vain  
To hope him back beside me  
Ever again :  
Could one plunge make a waxing passion wane ?

'I thought, "Some wild stage-woman,  
Honour-wrecked . . . ."  
But no : it was inhuman  
To suspect ;  
Though little cheer could my lone heart affect.

## II.

'Yet came it, to my gladness,  
That, as vowed,  
He did return. But sadness  
Swiftly cowed  
The joy with which my greeting was endowed.

## THE NOBLE LADY'S TALE.

'Some woe was there. Estrangement  
Marked his mind.  
Each welcome-warm arrangement  
I had designed  
Touched him no more than deeds of careless kind.

"*I—failed!*" escaped him glumly.  
"—I went on  
In my old part. But dumbly—  
Memory gone—  
Advancing, I sank sick ; my vision drawn

"To something drear, distressing  
As the knell  
Of all hopes worth possessing!" . . .  
—What befel  
Seemed linked with me, but how I could not tell.

'Hours passed ; till I implored him,  
As he knew  
How faith and frankness toward him  
Ruled me through,  
To say what ill I had done, and could undo.

"*Faith—frankness.* Ah ! Heaven save such !"  
Murmured he,  
"They are wedded wealth ! I gave such  
Liberally,  
But you, Dear, not. For you suspected me."

'I was about beseeching  
In hurt haste  
More meaning, when he reaching  
To my waist  
Led me to pace the hall as once we paced.

"I never meant to draw you  
To own all,"  
Declared he. "But—I *saw* you—  
By the wall,  
Half-hid. And that was why I failed withal !"

“Where? when?” said I. “Why, nigh me,  
At the play  
That night. That you should spy me,  
Doubt my fay,  
And follow, furtive, took my heart away!”

‘That I had never been there,  
But had gone  
To my locked room—unseen there,  
Curtains drawn,  
Long days abiding—told I, wonder-wan.

“Nay, ’twas your form and vesture,  
Cloak and gown,  
Your hooded features—gesture  
Half in frown,  
That faced me, pale,” he urged, “that night in town.”

‘Straight pleaded I: “Forsooth, Love,  
Had I gone,  
I must have been, in truth, Love,  
Mad to don  
Such well-known raiment.” But he still went on

‘That he was not mistaken  
Nor misled.—  
I felt like one forsaken,  
Wished me dead,  
That he could think thus of the wife he had wed.

‘Well: what no words effected  
Thought achieved.  
It was my *wraith*—projected  
(He conceived)  
Thither by my tense brain at home aggrieved.

‘Thereon his credence centred  
Till he died;  
And, no more tempted, entered  
Sanctified,  
The little vault with room for one beside.’

## III.

Thus far the lady's story.  
Now she, too,  
Reclines within that hoary  
Last dark mew  
In Mellstock Quire, with him she loved so true.

A yellowing marble, placed there  
Tablet-wise,  
And two joined hearts enchased there  
Meet the eyes;  
And reading their twin names we moralise:

Did she, we wonder, follow  
Jealously?  
Was her denial hollow?  
Or saw he  
Some semblant dame? Or can wraiths really be?

Were it she went, her honour,  
All may hold,  
Pressed truth at last upon her  
Till she told—  
(Him only—others as these lines unfold.)

Riddle death-sealed for ever,  
Let it rest . . .  
One's heart could blame her never  
If one guessed  
That go she did. She knew her actor best.

THOMAS HARDY.

## THE ART OF CONVERSATION.

A LECTURE.

BY THE LATE CANON AINGER.

IN a very charming book which I hope you will all soon be reading—the ‘Letters of the late James Russell Lowell’—you will find an anecdote of his meeting Professor Mahaffy, of Trinity College, Dublin. The two professors met at a friend’s house in Birmingham, and the friend confessed he had never listened to four hours of such admirable converse before. And no wonder, for those who have the privilege of knowing Professor Mahaffy, author of ‘Social Life in Greece,’ and other works full of scholarship and charm, know him to be one of the best talkers living. When Lowell drove away in the carriage, he exclaimed to his host: ‘Well, that’s one of the most delightful fellows I ever met, and I don’t mind if you tell him so!’ The friend did so, and Mr. Mahaffy received the compliment with equal grace and modesty. ‘Poor Lowell!’ he exclaimed; ‘to think that he can never have met an Irishman before!’

Yes; and doubtless race is an element in the humour and special conversational readiness of men like Professor Mahaffy and his countrymen; and it is this circumstance which, to my mind, slightly weakens the force of an admirable little book which Professor Mahaffy published a few years ago, on ‘The Art of Conversation’—a title which I must apologise to him for having borrowed. Not that I am sure the title correctly describes Mr. Mahaffy’s disquisition any more than it will precisely fit mine. It is with the ethics of conversation that he largely deals—on those moral qualities of tact, courtesy, self-repression, and others, which have so much to do with the success of a conversationalist. But what I meant by a certain defect in the premises of Mr. Mahaffy’s arguments is this—that he too readily assumes, I think, the existence in everybody of a talent in this direction—a talent which he conceives can in all cases be cultivated and made to minister to an adequate brilliancy of conversation. The writer, belonging to a nation of humorists, and gifted with that rare facility and



versatility of expression that belong to the Celtic race, and, in addition, possessing a wide and various culture rare in any individual of any race, may well be excused for pitching the average of human capability in this kind too high. The society of wits and scholars, among which his calling and pursuits place him, not unnaturally engenders the idea that conversation elsewhere, being so much duller, might be improved if only people would take pains and have a few lessons. And it is significant, as I have said, that starting from something like this ground, he is yet found falling back at last upon the moral rather than the intellectual faculties. For the former *can* be cultivated, the latter, perhaps, not so certainly.

For there is a wide and clear difference, though often strangely overlooked, between talking and conversation, and the rules for each, and the qualifications for each, are quite distinct. They are two separate arts, and have both to be practised by us in turn; and one of the chief points we have on occasion to settle—and herein lies one of the chief secrets of our ‘social success’ (a hateful expression, by the way, but for the moment it will serve)—will consist in our understanding the two things, and knowing when to practise the one and when the other. Indeed, there is yet a third art, which some persons find harder than either of the others. I mean the art of listening. ‘Each man in his time plays many parts’; and in this matter of conversation there are three of them that have to be studied. The first—that of the talker—is the easiest; and that whether we belong to the good talkers or the poor—the *di majores* or the *di minores* of conversation. The former class must always obviously be the smaller. The great talkers who were also excellent stand out in our history. They rise at once to memory—Samuel Johnson, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lord Macaulay. These had doubtless the defects of their qualities, and did not always afford unmixed pleasure by their great gifts. Their talent had its humorous, even its provoking, aspect. Inferior talkers grudged these men their monopoly. They wanted their own ‘innings’ to come; and it never came. They thought what they had got to say was quite as important, and did not see why it should not be said. But the men of greater mark were glad to listen. It was not the Burkes and Reynoldses who would have stopped Samuel Johnson’s mouth. They enjoyed to the full the masculine good sense, the wisdom (as of the just), the keen eye to cut through paradox and sophistry, the ever-flowing wit and

humour of their friend's discourse, even though he did at times lose his self-control, and was often very rude. And so, too, the poets and critics and philosophers loved to hear Coleridge talk on those Thursday evenings at Highgate, though, unlike Johnson, his speech went on with no punctuation at all. You know how once he buttonholed a friend and began to talk, with his eyes closed, after his fashion; and how, after an hour or so, the friend, who could not well stay longer, silently severed the button with his pocket-knife and stole away, returning after another hour, to find Coleridge still talking, with the button in his hand! Some enemy, of course, invented the story, but it shows which way the wind was blowing. No doubt it was not conversation! 'Pour un monologue,' said Madame de Staël; 'c'était excellent; mais pour un dialogue—ah, mon Dieu!' And so with Macaulay, and we know how his witty friend praised his 'flashes of silence.' And yet you and I would give something to be allowed to sit still and hear these geniuses talk, and, I venture to say, would not even wish to 'get a word in.' And the race of good *talkers*, as distinguished from *conversers*, is not extinct yet, though, as has been often pointed out, the extraordinary development of periodicals causes men, somewhat mercenarily, to 'save up' their good thoughts and happy expressions, and, instead of using them in conversation, send them to some magazine. They grudge to give for nothing what is worth twenty guineas. And then, too, in so-called intellectual society, there has been such a gradual levelling up, in cleverness and information, that the good talker is rarely so much in advance of his company as to be justified in appropriating so much of their time. Indeed, in certain educated societies that I have heard of, the general average of learning and accomplishment is so high that not only 'talking' but 'conversation' is almost extinguished. In the college society of the great University of Oxbridge, I have been assured by 'those who know' that this happens. Every one is so terribly afraid of every one else that no one dares to express a sentiment for fear it should be decried as a novelty, or scorned as a truism, or by some other test tried and found wanting. Things, in fact, come to a deadlock, with no one to enter, as in 'The Critic,' and cry: 'In the Queen's name, drop your swords and daggers!'

Now all this is very sad, and may well make us thankful that we do not move always in societies so highly cultivated. But there is another kind of 'talker,' at the opposite end of the scale.

who perhaps troubles us more, and of whom, also, we have learned to feel some dread; for there are talkers and talkers—those who talk because they are gifted that way beyond their fellows, because they have information to give, or criticisms to pass that are really of sterling value; or who, perhaps, are delightful to hear because, though they do not contribute to the common stock of facts or arguments, they so adorn the commonplaces of life that they are never unwelcome. To parody what I am informed is a favourite ballad in some circles, 'It is not so much what they say, as the charming way they say it.' But there are talkers whom one meets who talk, not out of a desire to add anything new to some subject under discussion, but simply impelled, as it would appear, by the sheer passion for narrating, independently of the value of the facts narrated. Swift, in his 'Hints towards an Essay on Conversation' (you may remember Charles Lamb quotes the passage in his 'Imperfect Sympathies'), summarises the habit thus: 'There are some people who think they sufficiently acquit themselves and entertain their company with relating facts of no consequence, not at all out of the road of such common incidents as happen every day.' And Swift goes on, strangely enough, to say that he has noticed the habit more frequently among the Scots than any other nation. Now Swift does not often miss the mark, but I think he does here; and I think it is because he lived so much among the cleverest men of his day—the wits and statesmen, the Temples and Harleys and St. Johns, the Popes and Gays and Arbuthnots—that he really did not know much of conversation in circles less brilliant. For most surely the habit he notices is not, and can never have been, peculiarly Scotch. One doubts whether it is a 'race' question at all, but it certainly flourishes in England, as, no doubt, it did also in Swift's day. We have a special name for the thing in our own day. We call it boring, or being a bore. The name was not invented, I think, in Swift's day, but the thing must have been, because the moral or intellectual limitations that produce it are not of an age, but of all time. Observe, please, that I am careful to say 'limitations' rather than 'deficiencies.' We are apt, when we are keenly suffering from the infliction in question, to cry 'Idiot!' if not something stronger. But to do this would be often harsh and unreasonable, as our great masters in fiction and satirical writing have always discerned; and it is a type of character that many of them have seized upon, because of its humorous possibilities. May I refer you, for instance, to the im-

mortal Miss Bates, in Miss Austen's novel of 'Emma'—the finest instance in fiction, because the most free from caricature, of the good, and sweet, and kindly bore that I can recall? Who would ever think a hard thought of dear Miss Bates, though we are allowed to see how sorely her hearers could be tried in patience and in temper? You remember how she communicated to Emma Woodhouse the intelligence of having received a letter from Jane Fairfax:

'Have you heard from Miss Fairfax so lately? I am extremely happy. I hope she is well?'

'Thank you. You are so kind!' replied the happily deceived aunt, while eagerly hunting for the letter. 'Oh, here it is. I was sure it could not be far off; but I had put my huswife upon it, you see, without being aware, and so it was quite hid; but I had it in my hand so very lately that I was almost sure it must be on the table. I was reading it to Mrs. Cole, and since she went away I was reading it again to my mother, for it is such a pleasure to her—a letter from Jane—that she can never hear it often enough; so I knew it could not be far off, and here it is, only just under my huswife—and since you are so kind as to wish to hear what she says—but, first of all, I really must, in justice to Jane, apologise for her writing so short a letter—only two pages, you see, hardly two, and in general she fills the whole paper and crosses half. My mother often wonders that I can make it out so well. She often says, when the letter is first opened, "Well, Hetty, now I think you will be put to it to make out all that checker-work"—don't you, ma'm? And then I tell her I am sure she would contrive to make it out for herself, if she had nobody to do it for her, every word of it—I am sure she would pore over it till she had made out every word. And, indeed, though my poor mother's eyes are not so good as they were, she can see amazingly well still, thank God! with the help of spectacles. It is such a blessing! My mother's are really very good indeed. Jane often says, when she is here, "I am sure, grandmama, you must have had very strong eyes to see as you do, and so much fine work as you have done too! I only wish my eyes may last as well."'

In Forster's *Life of Dickens* he mentions that when he first read 'Nicholas Nickleby,' and made the acquaintance of Mrs. Nickleby, he inquired of Dickens whether he had not taken the suggestion of the character from Miss Bates. I cannot think John Forster here showed his usual acumen. Mrs. Nickleby is a delightful humorous creation, but the very 'humorousness' is a blot upon it, artistically. If all bores were as diverting as Mrs. Nickleby, it would be easier than it is to suffer them gladly. The truth is that the opportunities presented by such a study of imbecility were too tempting to be resisted, and Dickens's own exquisite sense of incongruity was made to embellish Mrs. Nickleby's own. Listen:

'Kate, my dear,' said Mrs. Nickleby, 'I don't know how it is, but a fine warm summer day like this, with the birds singing in every direction, always puts me in mind of roast pig, with sage-and-onion sauce, and made gravy.'

'That's a curious association of ideas, is it not, mamma?'

'Upon my word, my dear, I don't know,' replied Mrs. Nickleby. 'Roast pig—let me see. On the day five weeks after you were christened we had a roast—no, that couldn't have been a pig, either, because I recollect there were a pair of them to carve, and your poor papa and I could never have thought of sitting down to two pigs—they must have been partridges. Roast pig! I hardly think we ever could have had one, now I come to remember, for your papa could never bear the sight of them in the shops, and used to say that they always put him in mind of very little babies, only the pigs had much fairer complexions, and he had a horror of little babies, too, because he couldn't very well afford any increase to his family, and had a natural dislike to the subject. It's very odd, now, what can have put that in my head! I recollect dining once at Mrs. Bevan's, in that broad street round the corner by the coachmaker's, where the tipsy man fell through the cellar-flap of an empty house nearly a week before the quarter-day and wasn't found till the new tenant went in—and we had roast pig there. It must be that, I think, that reminds me of it, especially as there was a little bird in the room that would keep on singing all the time of dinner—at least, not a little bird, for it was a parrot, and he didn't sing exactly, for he talked and swore dreadfully: but I think it must be that. Indeed, I am sure it must. Shouldn't you say so, my dear?'

No; Dickens has elsewhere, in a little paper in his 'Household Words,' drawn far more accurately the chronic bore of society, concentrating into the few speeches attributed to the character all the essential qualities that go to make it—the egotism, the absence of all sense of the relative importance of details, the deficiency of tact (that 'angel of the world')—that is to say, the inability to detect or feel when a topic interests your hearers, and when it does not, and to regulate your speech accordingly. This is how 'our bore,' you may remember, relates the interesting particulars of an early illness of his:

You will learn how our bore felt a tightness about here, sir, for which he couldn't account, accompanied with a constant sensation as if he were being stabbed—or, rather, jobbed—that expresses it more correctly—jobbed—with a blunt knife. Well, sir! This went on, until sparks began to fly before his eyes, water-wheels to turn in his head, and hammers to beat incessantly thump, thump, thump, all down his back—along the whole of the spinal vertebrae. Our bore, when his sensations had come to this, thought it a duty he owed to himself to take advice, and he said, Now, whom shall I consult? He naturally thought of Callow, at that time one of the most eminent physicians in London, and he went to Callow. Callow said, 'Liver!' and prescribed rhubarb and calomel, low diet, and moderate exercise. Our bore went on with this treatment, getting worse every day, until he lost confidence in Callow, and went to Moon, whom half the town was then mad about. Moon was interested in the case; to do him justice he was very much interested in the case; and he said 'Kidneys!' He altered the whole treatment, sir—gave strong acids, cupped, and blistered. This went on, our bore still getting worse every day, until he openly told Moon it would be a satisfaction to him if he would have a consultation with Clatter. The moment Clatter saw our bore he said, 'Accumulation of fat about the heart!' Snugglewood, who was called in with him, differed, and said, 'Brain!'

But, what they all agreed upon was, to lay our bore upon his back, to shave his head, to leech him, to administer enormous quantities of medicine, and to keep him low; so that he was reduced to a mere shadow, you wouldn't have known him, and nobody considered it possible that he could ever recover. This was his condition, sir, when he heard of Jilkins—at that period in a very small practice, and living in the upper part of a house in Great Portland Street; but still, you understand, with a rising reputation among the few people to whom he was known. Being in that condition in which a drowning man clutches at a straw, our bore sent for Jilkins. Jilkins came. Our bore liked his eye, and said, 'Mr. Jilkins, I have a presentiment that you will do me good.' Jilkins's reply was characteristic of the man. It was, 'Sir, I mean to do you good.' This confirmed our bore's opinion of his eye, and they went into the case together—went completely into it. Jilkins then got up, walked across the room, came back, and sat down. His words were these. 'You have been humbugged. This is a case of indigestion, occasioned by a deficiency of power in the Stomach. Take a mutton chop in half-an-hour, with a glass of the finest old sherry that can be got for money. Take two mutton chops to-morrow, and two glasses of the finest old sherry. Next day I'll come again.' In a week our bore was on his legs, and Jilkins's success dates from that period!

Now in these three examples, I think, the secret of boredom is very fairly illustrated—in that commonest form of it, at least, which consists in relating facts about one's self, or others, which can have little interest to the hearer; or on a scale wholly disproportionate to that interest. I don't mean gravely to analyse the 'cause of this effect,' or (terrible thought!) I might bore you. But it argues a defect, you will recognise, not wholly intellectual, nor wholly moral, but a little of both. You have all often tried to construct such an analysis for yourselves, when grievously tried. 'Little things,' you have perhaps cynically remarked, 'are great to little men.' And it wouldn't matter if only the little men would keep the little things to themselves. And, on the other hand, when you have been pleased and exhilarated with a friend's talk, you have learned the same truth in a pleasanter way. There was not too much of it. He (or she) knew where to stop; and you have discovered that Sam Weller's remark about letter-writing is even more true about talking—for you can read a letter or not as you choose, but good breeding often obliges you to listen. 'She'll wish there was more. That's the great art and secret of letter-writing!'

But a talker and a conversationalist are different things—a rudimentary lesson which many have yet to learn, and yet there is room for the talker in all good conversing company; for it takes 'all sorts' to make good conversation, as it does to make a world. There is always room for the talker if he has that right to talk which information on some topic of interest gives a man. When any important subject is freshly before the world, how delightful



to meet a man who understands it, who has made it his own, from first-hand authorities, not merely primed with the leading article of his favourite journal ; how gladly we all listen, except, perhaps, our friend the bore, who grudges every minute that shortens his own innings. For myself, I am more than content to be silent at such times, and by no means agree that the man who is a listener only is necessarily (as Professor Mahaffy rather harshly determines) a selfish being. But there your good talker, like your good conversationalist, has to learn when to stop ; and then comes the turn for conversation—for the shrewd objection, the question on some point not quite understood, the appropriate anecdote or quotation ; and so the patient listener becomes in his turn a useful speaker, and so the talk includes the many, and the company is happy and well content because they have given as well as received. But then there must be careful watching as to the topic—religion and politics, for instance, must be steered clear of. And there is another whole class of subjects which are generally supposed to make the very life and soul of good conversation, but which, I confess, seem to me almost useless, if not worse. I mean questions of taste. The very ancient proverb, ‘*De gustibus non disputandum*’ (‘there is no arguing about tastes’), ought surely to convince us of this. For just consider what ‘taste’ means, if it has any meaning of value at all, in our own case. Our ‘tastes,’ in men, or books, or music, or scenery, or whatever it be, if they are worthy of the name, were not formed yesterday, and they belong to the very depths of our individuality. We have a kindred proverb, ‘There is no accounting for tastes.’ Of course there is not ; they are part of a hidden life, which no one knows, not even ourselves—our heredity, our early associations, our education, besides all those casual and indirect influences that have been all our life around us. These tastes alter, doubtless, with many of us, if we are worth anything. Taste is cultivated, and most of us can look back with something of dismay at the things we admired and thought the best, say, twenty-five years ago. ‘For not even the youngest of us are infallible,’ as the late Master of Trinity used to say. But then change is gradual, and cannot under any circumstances be accomplished by a *coup de main*. And yet we often hear persons engaged in an argument, say, over a dinner-table, in which these indisputable facts are quietly overlooked. A gentleman who prizes his ‘Thackeray,’ let us say, discovers that a gentleman opposite prizes only his ‘Dickens.’ In both cases the taste



is the formation of years, and has its roots in the 'abyssal depths of personality.' And yet you will hear these two well-intentioned men arguing over the relative claims to admiration of their favourites, with the idea, presumably, that they can convert one another in the course of ten minutes' converse. *O, sancta simplicitas!* And the same remark applies to those who do not invite argument, but only information, under such limited and precarious circumstances. Some persons have no perception of what *can*, and what *CANNOT*, be attained in conversation, and will ask you questions requiring a month or two to consider, and then another month or two to answer, between the courses at a dinner party! I remember once a lady I sat next to asking me suddenly: 'Canon Ainger, what is your opinion of Carlyle?' Well, I hope I have been decently brought up, so I did not make the rejoinder which would have best expressed my feelings. I did not reply: 'Goodness gracious, madam, how can you ask such a preposterous question under such preposterous circumstances?' (I remember I was just beginning my fish.) For, you see, my neighbour was not even opening a discussion merely—in itself most improper at such a serious moment. She wanted, apparently, an encyclopædia article offhand; and that, too, without my knowing (a thing in itself most important) the previous history (as a physician would say) 'of the case.' But there is a time for everything, the wise man has said, and there are times for discussion and times for conversation, and the two things are far from being the same thing. Conversation is wanted by most people as a healing agency after the rubs and the worries and the exhaustion of business or domestic cares; and discussion, if it brings mental activity into play, is often just what the overtaxed mind does not seek. An overtaxed body, or an occupation chiefly manual, is no doubt relieved and rested by bringing intellect into play—as the game of chess is often found the best of tonics and alteratives for occupations chiefly mechanical and manual. Change of exercise, rather than cessation of it, is the soul of recreation. You know the old story of the man who would stand up in the pit of a theatre, and would not sit down, in spite of the indignant cries of 'Down in front!' 'Turn him out!' 'Let him alone,' exclaimed an Irishman in the rear; 'let him alone! It's only a tailor resting himself!' And we are all of us, in this respect, 'tailors,' and want to bring into play in our hours of social enjoyment just those muscles, so to speak, which we have not been using during the day. But then

for most of us, in this fast-living, over-exhausting modern life, we need (carrying on the metaphor) to 'sit down' rather than to 'stand up'; and with this end, discussion, or rather antagonism in conversation is almost always a mistake. When we recall the discussions on matters of taste at which we have been present, we shall recall as the happiest and most profitable those in which the company were in the main agreed. For no discussions about taste (supposing they leave matters, as they always do, just as they were before) can end in any other way than that of showing that A. thinks but poorly of B.'s taste, and B. very meanly of A.'s. Neither is converted, and neither made more amiable in the ineffectual process; for the literary or artistic Ethiopian cannot so change his skin. But, on the other hand, intelligent agreement—how it opens hearts and warms them, and brings people closer together! 'So monotonous!' do you rejoin? 'no interest where all are agreed.' Ah, just try it where the agreement, at least, is real, and not merely the result of both parties following the same fashion. Listen how a guest who genuinely loves some painter some musician, some writer—a Frederick Walker, a Schubert, a Miss Austen—who has, perchance, long remained silent, and seemed inert or anti-social—notice how his shyness is overcome, his mind fertilised, his heart warmed, by the chance mention in an appreciatory way of his favourite by some one in the company. And if two or three more join in, observe how people are by degrees brought out of their reserve and suspicion. One cites his own favourite drawing, or song, or novel; another quotes a passage or character which others have forgotten; and so they are all made happier by the discovery that they are not alone in their judgment and their liking; and this is very well worth noting, because, on the first blush, it contravenes what many of us have come to think axiomatic—namely, that the chief interest and profit are to be got out of what they call the 'conflict of minds'—that it is difference of opinion, not agreement, that promotes good conversation. Argument, in my experience, as distinguished from discussion, fighting, too, for victory, and in defence of one's own ingrained opinion, certainly does not generate 'sweetness,' and I very much doubt if it often promotes 'light'—the defeated party, even if he be left in a minority of one, being usually wont to go away, like the juryman in the story, exclaiming: 'The most obstinate eleven men I ever met in my life!'

And, indeed, this brings one to consider the great importance

in conversation of the presence of some one leader, or rather 'moderator' (as the admirable Scottish phrase has it), who has by right of his position (that of host or hostess for example) to watch, and by the exercise of skill or tact at once to keep conversation going, and to preserve it from degenerating into endless and useless argument. It is the office of the pointsman, rather than the engine-driver, that is so important. For while it is very necessary (for the happiness of all parties) that a conversation should not flag, it is almost as necessary, in moments of danger, to know how to 'shunt' the conversation on to some safer or more profitable line. Great responsibility therefore attaches to the head of a table, or whoever is master of the situation by courtesy. And this is why, as was long ago discovered, a dinner party to be good for anything (beyond the mere enjoyment of the menu) should neither be too large nor too small. Some forgotten genius laid it down that the number should never be less than that of the Graces, nor more than that of the Muses, and the latter half of the epigram may be safely accepted. Ten as a maximum, eight for perfection, for then conversation can be either dialogue, or spread and become general, and the moderator has not a larger team than he can profitably watch over. It is the dinner party of sixteen to twenty that is so terrible a risk, especially when no thought has been bestowed upon the mixture of this human salad, and when the most social and communicative person may find himself wedged in, and helpless, between two 'too, too solid' pieces of flesh, neither of whom will 'rise' (if I may be allowed to mix my metaphors) to any 'fly' that may be thrown over them. But I feel I am here drifting on to a siding, and must 'shunt' on to the main line.

For you will be asking impatiently what then is conversation, if it is not 'talking,' and if it is not argument? Well, remember that I distinguished argument from discussion. Discussion is, I admit, the life of conversation; argument is often its death. The fault of most discussions is that talkers are not content with them, but will insist on forcing them to divisions, to a taking of votes. The Dean of Westminster<sup>1</sup> recently set an admirable example in this matter, at the Abbey meeting on the coal strike. He said: 'Gentlemen, we are here to exchange thought, to supply information, to hear arguments, and thus to help ourselves and each other to more light on the question; but we are not here for the merely

<sup>1</sup> The late Dean of Westminster.

exasperating purpose of winning a victory over others, and so we will not divide on the points raised.' Accordingly those who had come thirsting for one another's blood did not like it. Now, to compare great things with small, the fallacy which the Dean detected and resisted is just that which wrecks so many conversations. The talkers want a vote taken, instead of being content with the contribution of facts and ideas, illuminating and fertilising in the end, according to their value, but not obliging any one to go away either conqueror or conquered. But already there will have occurred to you the obvious objection to all this, that I am assuming that conversations for the most part have anything illuminating or fertilising about them. You will say, and with reason, that we can't all be clever, or learned, or well informed, or have the gift of producing our best at a moment's notice. Conversation must be for the most part on commonplace topics, and conducted by average people. Is there any art in this latter case? Are there any principles that can be learned and applied, and so help us all to any higher ground or more fruitful results in the matter? Principles, perhaps, but certainly not rules. Conversation cannot be got up and materials provided to order. Yet I believe, strange to say, that there are little books published, and much resorted to in some circles, which profess to supply dialogue for the use of bashful ladies and gentlemen who mistrust their own originality: 'openings,' in fact, similar to those in chess, giving the first two or three moves to each side, and then leaving them, their nervousness being so far removed, to continue on their own responsibility afterwards. But this, you will all agree, is to add a new terror to society. Better, far better, a spontaneous observation (if not abnormally silly) than the most carefully framed sentence out of a book. 'An ill-favoured thing,' Touchstone pleaded with regard to poor Awdrey, 'but mine own.' Better even, which is going a long way, the unprofitable chat which is reported of such society as is drawn, I have no doubt with a great deal of truth, in that delectable romance called 'Dodo.' For it at least teaches us, as the drunken helot taught the Spartans, what to avoid. And this reminds one how alike the conversation of fashionable circles (sometimes called good society) is in all times. Originality it has none, the great point being, never to be serious, and to indulge in continual repartee, called by men smartness, but by the gods vulgarity. I dare say some of my audience know Swift's famous 'Polite Conversations'; for though few people, alas! know that

great genius at first hand, still many read Thackeray, and will recall certain extracts introduced by him into his lecture on Swift, in his lectures on the Queen Anne writers. Critics (it seems to me) have generally mistaken the point of these conversations. They appear to any one coming to them for the first time as if the gallant company assembled—Miss Notable, Lord Sparkish, Tom Neverout, and the rest—did nothing but talk in proverbs, and the reader wonders if such a state of things ever existed, and what Swift meant to satirise. Well, the reader is not far out. A proverb or 'nay-word' does not come into the world a proverb. Lord John Russell called a proverb 'the wit of one, and the wisdom of many'; but with regard to slang (which is, as it were, a temporary or limited proverb) the definition has been thus amended: 'the idiocy of one, and the vulgarity of many.' The resource of those who are without invention, or don't care for the trouble of thinking, has always been to repeat, as occasion serves, what they have heard and laughed at elsewhere. Hence current sayings have the tendency to harden and crystallise into by-words; and I remember the first time I ever read Swift's 'Polite Conversations,' my surprise and delight at finding that the dining and drawing room facetiæ of Miss Notable and her friends were already familiar to me, I having heard many of them from my nurse when I was a child. I did not, of course, know then that these downstairs vulgarisms had once been the staple of upstairs fashionable converse. When we children, I remember, used to ask our nurse, with infantile frankness, how old she was, she used to reply: 'As old as my tongue, and a little older than my teeth.' And it was not till long afterwards that I learned how Miss Notable employed the same evasive device in answering Mr. Tom Neverout. The phrase had once, that is to say, known better days, but had come down in the world. It is so that fashions descend, whether in garments or in speech. Sixty years ago our grandfathers in the best society talked of 'theay-ter' and 'cow-cumber'; to-day such a pronunciation makes us shudder, recalling too painfully Mary the housemaid, or Mrs. Gamp. And even so, the by-word, the slang (for it is nothing else) descends, and fresh slang takes its place. For there is a slang quite other than what we hear in the streets, but none the less slang; for slang is only somebody else's foolishness (often no doubt at starting a droll foolishness) borrowed and used by every one else. Well, Swift's method of producing his effects is this. He had jotted down during many years these

flowers of speech, as he heard them used, and then composed his dialogues as if ordinary conversation consisted exclusively of such phrases, as if everybody in turn used nothing else, as if the conversational pudding were entirely plums (such as the fruit is). You remember the style, and how ludicrous and contemptible the social flow is made by this means to appear, which is just what Swift intended.

## ST. JAMES'S PARK.

LORD SPARKISH meeting COLONEL ATWIT.

*Colonel.* Well met, my Lord.

*Lord Sparkish.* Thank ye, Colonel. A parson would have said, I hope we shall meet in heaven. When did you see Tom Neverout?

*Colonel.* He's just coming toward us. Talk of the devil——

NEVEROUT comes up.

*Colonel.* How do you do, Tom?

*Neverout.* Never the better for you.

*Colonel.* I hope you are never the worse: but, pray, where's your manners? Don't you see my Lord Sparkish?

*Neverout.* My Lord, I beg your Lordship's pardon.

*Lord Sparkish.* Tom, how is it that you can't see the wood for trees? What wind blew you hither?

*Neverout.* Why, my Lord, it is an ill wind that blows nobody good; for it gives me the honour of seeing your Lordship.

*Colonel.* Tom, you must go with us to Lady Smart's to breakfast.

*Neverout.* Must! why, Colonel, must's for the King.

[*Colonel offering, in jest, to draw his sword.*]

*Colonel.* Have you spoke with all your friends?

*Neverout.* Colonel, as you are stout be merciful; &c., &c., &c.

Well, odd and vulgar as it all is, it is a little startling to reflect how like, *mutatis mutandis*, it all is to what is called conversation in certain circles after a hundred and fifty years. The constant use of hackneyed allusions, of what was then called raillery and is now known as 'chaff,' of what once was called rudeness and is now termed smart, and of second-hand thoughts clothed in second-hand language. A clever satirist who moved much in kindred circles at the present day might, if the game were worth the candle, collect a corresponding body of society phrases, and be equally amusing for those who stand outside and laugh; equally unprofitable for those satirised, for it is the weak side of satire that it has no moral function, no reforming virtue; the persons satirised never read the satire, and wouldn't understand it if they did, or recognise anything in it but ridicule, not of themselves, but of Mr. Smith over the way, or the Miss Robinsons round the corner.



Our clever modern satirists often, indeed, find their best material out of the platitudes or conventionalisms of conversation ; their method may seem unlike Swift's, but the difference is really only superficial, in the change of manners and ideas, not in the way of contemplating the human mind or the absence of it. Witness, for instance, Mr. Anstey Guthrie at a wedding.<sup>1</sup> I fully anticipate the objection that I go on telling what good conversation is *not*, and evade saying what it is. Well, definition is always difficult ; and sometimes truth is sooner arrived at by the slower path of eliminating the false. No one can define good converse, but we know it when we have been among it, or discovered its absence. And I think when we have come away from a conversation, our sense of its having been a success, pleasant and interesting, is somehow bound up with that of certain qualities of heart, rather than of mind, that have helped it to be so. The speakers were kindly and genuine, the reverse of self-obtruding, endowed with tact and skill ; and this state of things, rather than the stories we laughed at, or the new information we gained, remains as the dominant impression. 'It was not dull,' we decided, 'although not very brilliant.' Perhaps we might venture on a paradox, and substitute 'It was not dull, just because it was not very brilliant.' A conversation may easily be spoiled by the redundancy of this quality, whether it be the ebullitions of the original wit, or the stories of the inveterate *raconteur*. For, as to the former, his quality, even if rare, is a failure if it is anything more than a flavour to the discourse. We know how depressing a thing the jest-book is to read ; and it is no less depressing when it has to be listened to. Even epigrams must have some intervals between them, if they are to be enjoyed. I remember (if you will forgive a personal detail), as a child, our family dining with some intimate friends one Christmas Day, when the daughters of the house, who were supposed to have a talent that way, had made the pudding with their own hands. It came to table, fine in colour, if not in consistency, and every one tasted and said, 'A wonderful pudding, but surely much too rich.' And so it was, not because of what was there, but because of what was missing. The young ladies had forgotten the flour ! Even so, many a dinner-table talk is ruined because the 'flour' is omitted, the harmless, wholesome, tasteless, farinaceous nucleus which ought to form the restful and moderating influence in all conversation, leaving the intermittent

sultana and the occasional allspice, to say nothing of the solid suet and the pervasive cognac, to provide the flavour and the stimulant. And then there is the teller of stories, a welcome ingredient, indeed, if only they are not told at too great length, and are fairly fresh. Here, again, all social virtues are needed as a mitigating element—tact, and the quick observation of when the hearer is getting tired, lest he retort, as was once done: ‘Yes. I have known that story ever since it was an anecdote!’ And fairly fresh too. A single anecdote in an evening that is new to the company, as well as possessing other merit, is more exhilarating than a dozen which have too often done duty before. And I have myself known what it is to sit with others round a friend’s ‘mahogany tree,’ to feel too bitterly that the appropriate wood for that tree was not mahogany—but chestnut!

‘Take care of the heart,’ then, I would almost say, to those who aim, not at shining, but at being pleasant in conversation, ‘Take care of the heart, and the intellect will take care of itself.’ For the art of conversation is closely bound up with the deeper, wider art of giving pleasure. We have to cultivate first (and happily this can be cultivated) the art of ‘give and take.’ The art which grows out of Chaucer’s immortal description of the true scholar, ‘Gladly would he learn and gladly teach.’ Modesty, forbearance, kindliness, tact—the desire to please and the desire to be pleased—will tell in the long run against mere brilliancy, or the parade of information; still more against the affectation of universal scepticism and universal cynicism which wrecks human intercourse in so many companies in these days. Genuine cynicism is a bad enough thing, but it asks pity as well as condemnation at our hands; but the mock cynicism, the unreal sort, taken up for effect and as a fashion, asks no forbearance or toleration; the careless talk of men who, as a friend of mine happily put it, are like those cynics who are as old as the days of King David, but with a difference, for these ‘grin like a dog,’ but ‘run about’ the West-end.

If the ‘art of conversation’ cannot be taught from books, can it be taught any other way? How are we to train the rising generation, for instance, to be good and acceptable talkers as they grow older, seeing that there is one thing which we certainly cannot give them if Nature has denied it, and that is ‘brains’? Well, you know that bachelors’ children are proverbially well brought up, and therefore you will be disposed to give particular attention to what I say on this head! I am aware that in different homes



different and even opposite counsels prevail. In one house, the future member of society is told from the earliest age that young people must be seen and not heard, and 'that way lies' that engaging silence which so often charms foreigners as being so distinctively English. 'Silence,' Heine once defined, you know, as 'une conversation Anglaise.' In another house, the young candidate for social success is encouraged from the first to take his full share in whatever is under discussion. 'Don't sit glum and say nothing; assert yourself.' Both instructions, of course, are right, if properly blended. As the wise man said, 'there is a time to speak and a time to be silent.' But far better than maxims (here, as always) is the cultivation of those golden qualities which together make up a better education than all university extension lectures can furnish—unselfishness, tact, modesty, and discretion. Knowledge and information doubtless are one's stock-in-trade as to matter. To know something fairly well—accurately, but not too accurately—makes one acceptable in any society. Accuracy must not be pressed too far. Some one has said that 'accuracy' is the bane of conversation, and in any case, I would earnestly warn the young, if any one in their company refers to an incident as having happened on August 17, 1853, by no means to stop him because they happen to know it was on the 18th. But of all knowledge self-knowledge is the most useful, because that will tell you when you don't know anything of the subject before the meeting, as well as when you do. But, first and foremost of all things, banish pedantry, and believe that conversation that always aims at fostering 'useful knowledge' is a terrible misfortune. Let it wander at its own sweet will! One has heard hard-hearted pedants even attempt to formulate a law that all rational conversation (awful phrase!) ought to be about things—subjects—and not on persons. Not on persons! When we know on such high authority that the proper study of mankind is man, and 'gossip' is simply that very study conducted, so to speak, in dressing-gown and slippers. Ladies and gentlemen, you see I am settling nothing, taking votes on nothing, only throwing out a few suggestions for you, if I deserve such a compliment, to take home and think over. And so, as I have now for an hour given you (what the profane gentleman said of certain discourses elsewhere) 'so much talking without contradiction,' I beg to come down from the pulpit and ask you not to put any question, but to 'resolve yourselves into a committee of the whole House.'

THE HOME-COMING OF VINCENT BROOKE.<sup>1</sup>

BY HUGH CLIFFORD, C.M.G.

I.

It was on the deck of a P. and O. that our acquaintance was begun, the first night out from Hong-Kong, homeward bound. In England it was already autumn, but in the China Sea the hot weather was still upon us, wherefore the dinner-hour and the saloon were things of little comfort. The tiny flapping ship's punkahs, which never get a full swing in the cramped space, were puddling the heavy, dense air vainly without succeeding in inducing it to do more than *shake*, like a clammy, tepid jelly. The place reeked, too, with the odours of roast beef and other robust British fare wherewith the P. and O. Company is wont patriotically to regale its victims, in defiance of temperatures and of the eternal fitnesses. Altogether the saloon and the meal were things to be evaded, and we all found our way up the companion as speedily as we could.

On deck matters were a trifle better, though even here the heat made retirement into the smoking-room—that precious sanctuary of the male passenger—a manifest impossibility. Some of us, therefore, dropped into long chairs, and sprawled there panting and puffing in ungainly wise; others rested their backs against the rails, or leaning over the bulwarks, gazed at the marvellous phosphorescence in the waters disturbed by our passage; a few others, persons of weak intellect, set to work to plod the deck up and down, up and down, spurred by the futile determination to 'walk a mile' (as though ashore to walk a mile would be accounted hard exercise), by which, in the beginning of a long voyage, a certain percentage of passengers is invariably possessed.

A feeling of unrest pervaded the company—that feeling which belongs to the outset of a journey by sea before men have fitted themselves into the life of the ship, when all are more or less strangers to their new home and to one another. There were a dozen or more people who had come on board at Yokohama, and so, having become accustomed to their surroundings, formed an exclusive clique, whose members assumed proprietary airs over

<sup>1</sup> Copyright, 1905, by Hugh Clifford, in the United States of America.

the ship and of distant patronage to us new-comers. There were the usual groups—married couples who carried their homes and their comradeship with them all over the world, or chums who had made up their minds to travel together—but most of us were friendless, adrift in a barren world whose only inhabitants were English folk who, after the manner of their kind, eyed one another with deep disfavour and suspicion. It always takes a day or two before a ship can become the common property of all her passengers, before each individual can fall into his or her place in the small floating republic of which the captain is the benevolently despotic president, before men and women can be made mutually to reveal their names and occupations, and more than a little of their characters. These revelations, when they come, as come they must, are usually more complete afloat than ashore. Life on board ship is family life on a large and heterogeneous scale. For a matter of weeks your world consists of a number of men and women whom you have never seen before, whom, in all likelihood, you will never see again, yet for that space you breakfast, dine, and sup with them daily, take your pleasure (or what on board ship passes for such) in their company, while away many a weary hour talking to them of matters wherein your interests touch, and so arrive at an understanding of their idiosyncrasies and at a degree of intimacy which in more natural surroundings could only arise from keen mutual sympathy or predilection. This intimacy, though its growth is of mushroom-like rapidity, requires a day or two in which to develop, and at the outset a man is engaged in feeling his way, in taking note of his fellows, and in assorting his impressions concerning them for his future guidance or protection.

I came up early from the saloon like many others that first night out, and as the thought that I, at last, was homeward bound pricked me with a restless happiness, I had no mind to read or to settle down in my long-chair. Still less did I desire to 'walk a mile,' the which has always appeared to me to be an insult to the understanding, so instead I leaned over the rail watching the waves curling away from the ship's side in a glory of phosphorescent light, and fell a-dreaming of the dear Homeland, towards which the heart of the exile sets eternally, the land which after years of absence I was soon to see again.

I was awakened from my self-absorption by the sound of a sigh—a sigh so full of relief and content that, falling on the

quiet of the evening, it seemed to me more joyous than a peal of merriment. I looked round sharply at the man from whom it had escaped, and saw the long, gaunt figure of a man leaning over the rail a few feet away from me, his eyes fixed upon the dimly seen Chinese coast. Outlined against one of the electric deck-lights further aft his face showed in keen profile—a face aged, worn, sunken, with bulging forehead, strong aquiline nose, high cheek-bones, and a resolute, clean-shaven mouth and chin. Even in that uncertain light I could see that the face was deathly pale, and scored by deep lines such as are traced by care and thought and pain. Even as I watched him another sigh broke from his lips—a sigh that seemed to come from his very heart, so instinct was it with relief and content and gladness. Then he turned his eyes in my direction and caught me staring at him. He did not move a muscle of his long, drooping figure, but he spoke at once, though more, I thought, to himself than to me.

‘We are homeward bound,’ he said under his breath. ‘We are . . . going . . . Home!’ And again he gave vent to that happy sigh of satisfaction and deep content. I, who had made the journey to and fro near a dozen times, and had learned in exile how dear Home can be, was well used to the high spirits that belong to those who after many years find their faces turned at last in ‘the right’ direction; but in this man’s voice as he spoke of Home there was a note that was new to me. There was no light-hearted merriment in his tones, no laughing jubilation, but a certain strange solemnity and seriousness, such as some religious enthusiast might have used, who, after a life-time of longing, found himself at last on a pilgrimage to the Holy Places.

‘Yes, thank God,’ I said. ‘We ought to be in England by about the middle of October.’

‘Not quite so soon as that,’ he said. ‘Not quite so soon as that. You see, I am going by long-sea: I am not going across France. I want my first sight of Europe to be England herself—England with her white cliffs and the green downs crowning them—the England I have dreamed of so often, so often—the England I have not seen for years!’

His voice, which had a strange thrill in it, was sunken almost to a whisper. It was as though he was repeating aloud a thought that had long nestled silent in his heart: as though he half feared to frame his hope in speech lest it should go from him and elude him.

‘You have been out a long time?’ I asked.

He drew in his breath with a kind of sobbing sound.

'A long time?' he echoed. 'A long time? I have not seen England for two and forty years!'

He spoke just as a prisoner might have done who had been walled within the Bastille for all that weary space: as a blind man might have spoken who for two and forty years had not looked upon God's beautiful world.

'It is a long time,' I said, falling back weakly upon an obvious truism.

'Long?' he answered in a kind of frenzy. 'How long, O Lord, how long!'

He drew nearer to me, and gazing into my face, began to speak with a fierce, glib intensity.

'You do not know what it means,' he insisted. 'How many men are there, think you, who have had such banishment as mine? How many who have held the memory of England in their hearts year after year, and yet have watched her drifting further and further away into the seemingly unattainable distance? How many have dreamed of their home-coming as I have dreamed, and have seen the dream shattered over and over again? There were times when I told myself that God hated me. Why did He give me the longing if He refused me the ability to gratify it? I was a fool, sir, an impious fool. I know now that He ordered all things well according to His infinite wisdom: He withheld the joy so that when in His good time it should be vouchsafed to me I should receive it good measure, pressed down and running over! In a little space, a little space, I shall see her, England, our England, and then, and then—"Lord, lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes shall have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all the people; a light to lighten the Gentiles."'

He broke off in his fevered speech, his voice trailing away into the silence, and he stood by my side, his thin hands clutching the rail, his face yearning upward to the star-strewn heavens, his eyes blazing with an enthusiasm that seemed to me to be barely sane. Presently he resumed his monologue, his words coming in hurried jets, his tone vibrating and insistent.

'Think what she is! Think what she has done—will do—this England of ours! And I, I, I who was born in her, I who love her, worship her, have been banished from her shores for almost a lifetime. But I *know* her, sir, I know her, better perhaps than any who have never left her, better even than those who have gone

away from her and returned, not once but many times. I have learned to see her as she is—that little island stowed away in foggy seas—standing proudly apart from the rest of Europe, too fine to mingle with the lesser nations! My understanding of her has been bred of longing—the longing to see her, the longing presently to be satisfied! I have lain awake o' nights looking at those alien stars,' he pointed to where overhead the Southern Cross hung lop-sided in the velvet sky, 'they were always strangers, never friends, those stars, and I have understood what she is, this England of ours—the mightiest engine for good that God has ever fashioned—a light to lighten the Gentiles, a salvation prepared before the face of all the people! And now, now very soon, I shall *see* her, see her again!

'I was a boy, sir, when I quitted her, a boy with a boy's heart, a boy's understanding, a boy's callousness, a boy's love of adventure. I left her without a pang, God forgive me! I did not know what I was doing, what I was leaving—how should I? I was a child. It was only when England began to call to me and I could not go to her that I began in my turn to understand. That was twenty years ago, twenty years ago and more, and only now am I home-ward bound.

'It has been a hard time, sir, a hard time. I have tasted failure, drunk deep of it. Circumstances tethered me, and I could not win free. I was damned in an eternity of exile. I used to watch those tea-men going home every year, coming out every buying season, and the sight of them nearly drove me crazy. England meant nothing to them—so much to me! It was agony! It was like watching men making careless, insolent love to the goddess of one's worship! And all the while I knew, sir, knew that I, almost alone, understood what England is, saw her as in ages hence men will see her when all the obscuring littlenesses and jealousies of to-day are swept aside, for my comprehension of her has come to me in longing, in travail, and in love!'

'You will find England a great deal changed,' I said. I seemed that night to be doomed to be commonplace. It was the strained intensity of my companion, I think, that exercised upon me a repressive influence.

'Changed? No, sir, England cannot change. I shall find a land of graves, for those who were dear to me have passed to their rest, but England, England endures! We, we "weak race of venomous worms that sting each other here in the dust, we are not

worthy to live !” We change, but England lives, lives and works ! I am going home to look once more on *her*, upon England the immortal—not upon the faces of mere men and women, mortal like myself !’

He spoke like some wild seer, his eyes fixed upon the sky, his face still yearning upward, that resolute chin of his thrust out, and for a moment some of his enthusiasm was mine. My mind, too, was filled by the conception of that vast, free, unselfish Imperialism of which England—the England of all our dreams—is the centre, the inspiring spirit, the sustaining hope ; but too soon I fell a-thinking of the narrow interests of home-bred Englishmen, the which ever strike a chill to the heart of the man returning from the outskirts, of the lack of enthusiasm, the lack of sympathy, the lack of understanding of distant lands and peoples which seem to be inherent in the English character, and of the sheer ineptitude, the apathy, the indifference, and the self-contented inefficiency that seemingly are the inseparable qualities of British statesmanship. If history holds any lesson for us it teaches us at least that the English people has stumbled and blundered into empire, that it has had greatness thrust upon it almost in spite of itself. Is there any human institution extant that is a more fortuitous bungle than the British Constitution ? Yet, is there any method of government that the wit of man has up to now evolved which combines in greater perfection the advantages of highly organised order with a larger measure of individual freedom ? From these reflections (since it would seem to be foreordained that England should continue to stumble and to blunder) the hope may be extracted that England, like Clive when he twice tried and failed to destroy himself, is ‘reserved for something great’ ; that she will endure, less for her own sake than for that of the countless millions of alien folk to whom her rule has brought peace and a knowledge of better things ; that, in a word, Almighty God will sustain that which, for His own high purposes, He has brought into being in defiance (as it were) of the weaknesses, the stupidity, and the follies of His creatures. That is the hope and the belief to which I, and many of my kind, cling, finding therein some support and comfort : but I feared that my companion’s home-coming was like to bring to him some bitter moments of disappointment and disillusionment. It is always bad to come to close quarters and face to face with that which from afar one has learned to idealise.

‘I am going—Home !’ he repeated softly in a kind of rapture



uttering the word with a deep wonder and reverence. 'Home! God grant that I may live to see the white cliffs once more! It is all I ask for, pray for! Then shall I be content to die!'

He turned about and moved off abruptly, walking with uncertain steps in the direction of the companion, and that night I saw no more of my strange shipmate.

## II.

Such was my first meeting with Vincent Brooke, homing-exile, enthusiast, visionary, and imperialist, but during the remainder of the voyage I saw a great deal of him. He was a very sick man, with a constitution broken to pieces by his long sojourn in unhealthy regions of the East, and it soon became evident to most of us that he was only creeping home to die—even if his vitality sufficed to let him creep so far. We had even seas all the way down to Singapore, up through the Straits of Malacca, and right across to Colombo, even seas and light, hot airs, exactly suited to the needs of an invalid, and Brooke spent the whole of his time on deck, lying outstretched upon his long rattan chair, with a couple of spans of his thin, lanky legs hanging over the foot-rest. Upon his knee an unopened book would lie, held loosely in his long, nervous fingers, his eyes resting idly on the distant, colourless skyline. And always, I think, he was dreaming—dreaming of England and of the white cliffs upon which he was soon to look once more—turning over and over in his mind and tasting again and again the sheer delight of the fact that each throb of the screw was carrying him nearer and nearer to the Mecca of his pilgrimage. I often bore him company, for, since I had been engaged for a score of years in helping to bring about one of those experiments in administration that fired his imperialistic enthusiasm, he had conceived for me a respect and an admiration which were not infrequently embarrassing to me and were invariably amusing to my friends. We were all of us more or less interested in and sorry for the poor old fellow, for his dwindling strength, the race he was plainly running with death, and his tremendous, undimmed enthusiasms, bursting forth now and again in a veritable flame, endowed him at once with romance and pathos.

Philippa, however, took him from the first under her especial charge, for hers is a heart that is moved to tenderness by the sight of any ailing creature, and since the East has robbed her of the care

of her little ones, she is more than ever given, I think, to 'mothering' the forlorn. Perhaps it helps to dull an ache of which she says so little and thinks, I fear, so much. Any way I felt myself to be neglected during those days of sunny sailing through untroubled seas, and said so with the frank selfishness of my kind, but old Vincent Brooke was thereby the gainer. Philippa constituted herself unofficial sick nurse to the old invalid, waited on him hand and foot, and would sit by his side for hours, reading aloud to him, talking with him or listening to his talk. I remember coming upon them one day and finding him with tears in his eyes, thumping the arm of his chair with his clenched fist, while he mouthed, inarticulate with emotion and enthusiasm. My wife, it seemed, had been reading him a story out of 'Deeds that Won the Empire,' and old Brooke was so moved with pride, so touched by the nobility, the splendour of the achievement there recorded, that he was nearly beside himself with excitement. Presently he lay back in his chair quite spent and weak.

'The Finger of God!' he murmured hoarsely. 'The Finger of God! He guided them, He upheld them, He led them, He sustained them that they should make our England what she is! What a privilege for them, what a wonderful privilege, to be used by Him for the fashioning of His marvellous work! But,' he added softly, almost inaudibly, "They also serve who only stand and wait!"—like me, God forgive me.'

Philippa drew me away.

'It is too much for him,' she said, and there were tears in her eyes, too. 'He is much weaker than he thinks, poor old dear. He gets so excited, it must be bad for him, and, oh Jack, do you think that he will live to see England? He is so ill, so ill—dying. He is much worse than he was when he came on board at Hong-Kong. It would be too cruel if he did not live to see England after all!'

I had promised Philippa that we would run up to Kandi while the transfer of our belongings from ship to ship was being effected at Colombo, and I had told her much concerning the fairyland upon which the traveller looks out as he climbs upward on that mountain railway; but that trip never came to pass. The transfer of old Vincent Brooke from the ship that had brought us from China to the vessel from Australia that was to bear us home was a delicate operation, it seemed, which called, in Philippa's opinion, for her personal care and supervision.

'I couldn't let the poor old thing scramble from the one ship to the other and pack all his belongings with no one to help him, now could I?' she demanded, and I said that I wished that old Vincent Brooke would do his dying at home decently and in private, like a sensible man, and not put the ordering of his last illness into the hands of my wife. Also I nicknamed him 'The Old Man of the Sea,' and wished him at the bottom of it, for my slender masculine charity was fast proving unequal to the strain imposed upon it by the situation. I, moreover, solemnly warned my wife against the evil of 'running a thing into the ground;' but Philippa only laughed at me and went upon her way quite unmoved, as is the habit of that young woman when subjected to grave marital rebuke.

From Colombo to Aden we had it fairly rough, and the nursing of old Brooke had to be transferred from the deck to the cabin of that interesting invalid, a proceeding against which I found myself bound to protest, seeing that all the ports were closed on both sides of the ship, and the atmosphere between decks was such that you could dig it out with a trowel. None the less I had the satisfaction of watching Philippa driving the stewards and supervising the bone-idle young ship's doctor with an efficiency that was refreshing.

The Red Sea was as unspeakably abominable as usual, but the heat made old Brooke free of the deck once more, and seeing him again in the full daylight after the dim dusk of the cabin, I was shocked at the change which the week had wrought in his appearance. The heat—the breathless, restless, maddening heat of the Red Sea—while it nearly stifled all of us, appeared to do the old fellow good, and Philippa was constantly beside him, though I noticed that now he cared little to be read to, and that they passed long hours almost without a word interchanged.

Once when I was alone with him he turned to me suddenly with something of his old fiery enthusiasm in his face and voice.

'I hope you thank God properly,' he said, with a kind of ferocity. 'It is only England, mind you, that breeds such women as your wife—and there are not too many like her, I suspect—even in England!'

He said no more, but turned away from me abruptly as though he was ashamed, and that was the nearest approach to a doubt or a reflection upon England that I ever remember to have heard him utter.

In the Ditch we had merciless, blazing sunshine beating down upon us, through which the distant sand-dunes took to themselves

the likeness of snow-covered hills, and a fierce, driving wind charged us all day long from out the desert. At Port Said, which we reached after nightfall, a blast of biting breeze swept up to us from the Mediterranean, and next day we were in European waters at last and huddled to the chin in ulsters. Old Brooke was a close prisoner down below, for the cold searched his withered frame shrewdly, and Philippa was busy devising all manner of contrivances designed to keep some warmth and what remained of life in that worn-out body. I did not interfere, for though she was working herself to death (in my opinion), a few more days would bring us to Marseilles, and there she would perforce have to resign her charge to other hands. All the same, when I thought of this, I was sorry for old Brooke.

We had not seen the children for nearly three years, and Philippa, I know, had been thinking of them with all a mother's anxious ponderings for every waking moment of that dreary time: dreaming of them, too, o' night, I daresay, if all the truth were told. When we left Hong-Kong she had hung a little calendar against the wall in our cabin, and each day she had ticked off yet another space that divided her from her darlings. Now the days had dwindled down to such tiny numbers that she could count the hours, almost the minutes, that stood between her and her heart's desire. Even I was restless with anticipation of a joy long deferred, soon now to be realised.

The only way to deal successfully with restlessness and other nervous weaknesses, I find, is to immerse yourself in work, and therefore by the time we were passing up the Straits of Messina I was deep in a manuscript which required more than ordinary concentration of attention. At such times interruption is apt to make me fractious, and so, I fear, Philippa found when she came into the big, empty saloon that morning and laid her little hand upon my shoulder. I do not know what it was I said, but it was something about the impossibility of doing decent work if one was subjected to constant, unnecessary interruption.

'I am sorry, Jack,' said Philippa, 'but I can't help it. I must speak to you. Jack, I've been thinking. We oughtn't to leave him. He is dying, and, oh it is so pitiful! There is not a soul to look after him, or to love him, and he is so worn and old and so good.'

'It really is no part of our business,' I said. I did not pretend to misunderstand her meaning. 'We are not a charitable institution.

You are dying to get home and see the chicks ; really even in the matter of self-sacrifice one must draw the line somewhere.'

She sat by my side drumming with her fingers on the table. And her forehead was drawn into little anxious puckers.

'It is very hard,' she said softly. 'But . . . It isn't what one *wants*, it is what one *ought* to do that matters. If we get off at Marseilles there will be nobody to look after him, and, oh it's horrible, he'll die alone and without a friendly voice to cheer him at the last. It is very hard, but don't you think, dear, that it is something that I ought to do?'

'I don't think that there is any "ought" in the matter,' I said. 'You have already slaved for him as no other woman in the world would have done. It is not a question of duty—you owe him nothing.'

'No, except . . . except that he is "One of these little ones!" Jack, God has made him as helpless as a child, and I simply can't leave him to die all alone, can I?'

I did not say much more. I knew better than any other living soul could do what was the price that Philippa was paying for that which she thought right, and when a man brings up short against that sort of unselfishness all he can do is to stand aside and lift his hat in silence and humility. She wanted me to go across France by myself, but that, of course, was nonsense, so in the end I went to the purser and effected an exchange of our railway coupons for passages by long sea.

The last week of that voyage, the week that carried us from Marseilles into English waters, was a weariness of the flesh. It seemed to be protracted to an eternity, for now old Vincent Brooke, shrunken almost to a shadow, was running a close race with death. The vitality of the man's spirit was wonderful: I say of his spirit, for the husk that held it was withered nearly away, while his soul, eager and strenuous as ever, fought to retain a hold on life. Philippa and I nursed him turn and turn about, and even to me it became at last a matter of the utmost moment to keep the poor old fellow alive long enough for his heart's desire to be fulfilled, long enough for him to look once more, to look his last, upon the England which he worshipped with such a passionate adoration. He lay upon his bunk day and night, and we fed him like an infant with tiny spoonfuls of food at frequent intervals. Sometimes he would be sunken in a torpor for hours at a stretch; at others he would talk to us in a voice so thin and far-away that it seemed to come to us

from beyond the grave. And his talk was always the same—of England, of the England of his boyhood's memories, of the England of which he since had read and thought so much, of the England that was the greatest of God's instruments for good, of the England that he *must* live to see once more ere he sang his *Nunc Dimittis* with contented heart. Sometimes we went rambling with him through the meadows and over the downs of which his memory still held the cherished pictures; at others we passed with him into outlying corners of the East, and, looking through his eyes, saw men toiling and working out their souls in exile and sickness and travail in the endless labour that is England's; and at all times it was striking how only the beauty of the dear homeland, only the nobility of the work which she has wrought were mirrored in his mind. It was as though this man had drawn away from the obscuring uglinesses and pettinesses of the present, and from the vantage ground of the future beheld the great scheme, in which God has made England the prime factor, in an exquisite perspective. It was good to listen to that dying man as he dwelt on these things, to hear those brave words spoken in those fainting tones, for it kindled a new life in hopes that were near to death. Even in these latter days, faith such as his has the power to move mountains.

The day that found us nearing at last the shores of England was mercifully warm, and in old Vincent Brooke a little life still lingered. Therefore, in obedience to his insistent prayer, having wrapped him up in rugs and furs, I carried him up on to the deck and laid him there upon a long chair so that he might catch the first glimpse of the shores of home. Philippa and I sat beside him and he lay there with his keen old eyes fixed on the skyline with a hungry light in them, and an eagerness that set his whole fragile frame fluttering. But the air was dense with a thin fog, and almost before we knew it the short October afternoon had waned and darkness was upon us. We had to bear him back to his cabin with the delight of his eyes still withheld from him.

That evening before I left the deck I saw the lights of a seaport town winking friendly English eyes at me, and was glad: but the old fellow was asleep when I crept into his cabin, and Philippa who was watching beside him signed to me to be still. Later in the night I relieved her, bidding her take some rest, though the excitement and the joy which the morrow would bring kept sleep from both of us, and I took my place by old Brooke's bunk. He lay resting like a child, I thought, and it was not until

just before the dawn that he moved. Then it was only to stretch his limbs feebly, just as a child stretches ere it wakes, and a sigh, such as a child might have breathed, escaped him : but for Vincent Brooke there was no waking. I leaned over him, and as the grey daylight began to steal over the world, giving up to view through the round port-hole the white cliffs of England, cold and dim in the wan light of the dawning, with the grey seas lapping at their feet, I looked down upon a face from which the fire of longing had at last departed.

I passed out of the cabin and met Philippa almost at the door. A glance at me was enough, I suppose, to tell her what had befallen—how we had failed to keep that flickering spark alight until Vincent Brooke should have looked once more on England. But, seemingly, the thought of failure was far from Philippa's mind.

'Thank God, Jack,' she whispered. 'Thank God, for—don't you see?—He has taken him Home!'



*THE NILE FENS.*

BY D. G. HOGARTH.

THE fenland of the Nile is not visited by the thousands who seek their pleasure winter by winter in Egypt. As they enter from Alexandria, a corner of it slips by as the train gathers speed for the run to Damanhur, and all the later wonders of the valley seldom efface that first impression of the Delta—the long vista of level mere under the sunset, and copper-green fields and anthill villages outlined against an amber sky. The contrary corner can be seen from a hurricane-deck between Port Said and Ismailia, where the silent stretches of marsh open on the right hand, relieved by flocks of long-legged birds which wade far out, or trail like wisps of smoke across the sun. But that is all the tourist sees. He never leaves the beaten tracks to explore the Fens, and no one since Heliodorus has described anything but the fringe of them.

They form a land apart from the rest of Egypt, very difficult to penetrate or to traverse even by boat, and inundated by stagnant waters of the great river, which are dammed by a broad belt of dunes, and contaminated with drainage of salt soils and the insetting sea. On the seaboard itself lies an almost continuous chain of vast lagoons, and for a long day's journey south of these the land will still be found deep marsh, rotten with the overflowing of disused canals and lost arms of the Nile, almost trackless, and only now beginning to undergo here and there the first process of reclamation.

In their present state, as might be expected, the fens have very few inhabitants; and perhaps none of the sparse settlements, now found within their southern fringe, is much older than the nineteenth century. For almost without exception these have grown up round isolated farmsteads, and still bear the names of local owners of land who were living far to southward not above a generation or two ago. When the Egyptian population under the rule of the last Mameluke Beys was not the half of its present figure, there was little temptation to attempt the conquest of saline and water-logged soils; and local tradition remembers a not distant epoch—not more distant than Muhammad Ali's day

—when all the district was a secure, if uncomfortable, refuge for the broken men who would avoid the tax-gatherer and the conscription-officer, or had deserted from the battalions that the inexorable Pasha was for ever sending to the conquest of Arabia, the Sudan, or Syria. The repute of the northern marshes remained what it had been in the fifth century after Christ, when Heliodorus described, in the opening scene of his 'Aethiopic Romance,' an amphibious outlawed society living there by fishing and raiding; and some trace of this state of things is still to be discerned in the timid and *farouche* manner which characterises even now the inhabitants of the few older hamlets. Here alone in modern Egypt *fellahi* women habitually bar the outer door at sight of a stranger, and children run to hide among the reeds or brushwood, and even grown men, met in the way, hold aloof like Bedawis till informed of your character and purpose. Although the animal is certainly not now to be found there, many natives asserted to me that they had seen the wild boar in past years, and twice I came on traditions even of the hippopotamus, traditions held by simple men, who can hardly have derived them from foreign sources. And why not from their fathers? For there is historical record of a hippopotamus having been killed in the Northern Delta in 1818.

Despite, however, the discouraging face of Nature, this fen has not always been the desolation it now is; and it was the knowledge that it had had a more populous past which took me there in the spring of 1903. The maps of it, all imperfect and sketchy as they are, show a number of ill-defined spots whose names are prefaced by *kum* or *tell*, sure indication of sites of ancient towns. For the past three years there has been found in Crete proof on proof of communication with Egypt, and where better than in the Northern Delta should its traces be sought beyond the sea? To be sure, nothing reminiscent of Ægean culture had been found in the Lower Delta up to that time; but there remained this unexplored marsh-land. I looked up the authorities. They supplied nothing, not even a mediæval or modern description of the region. All travellers had passed it by and betaken themselves to the higher valley. So I had to go, as to an unknown land, and see for myself; and, if in the event the things I had hoped to find were not forthcoming, others appeared by the way which I had not been led to expect.

To visit the marsh-land you may leave the 'Berari' railway, which traverses mid-Delta from Dessuk on the one Nile to

Sherbin on the other, at any point, but preferably at Kafres-Sheikh or Belkas, for thence roads have been made northward towards the limit of habitation. That is soon reached so far as the great flats are concerned, lying between the three or four main waterways, which are old Nile-arms. But along the farther course of these a few tiny clusters of huts may be seen to northward. Lower Delta hamlets are built up of mud into such fantastic pepper-pot forms as will throw off the frequent rains of the Delta, and, seen afar, suggest nothing so much as structures of gigantic building insects. Thereafter nothing lies ahead but the great saline flats, upon which vision is limited only by the curvature of the earth. Their monotonous surface is varied by great tracts of inundation, which dry slowly as the spring advances, leaving broad plains reticulated like a crocodile's hide, and always most treacherous where seeming most dry; for under their thin superficial cake of mud, white with efflorescent salts, lie depths of black saturated sand. Elsewhere the level is broken by soapy sand-hummocks, heaped round and over shrubs or clumps of reeds; and among these pool succeeds to slough and slough to pool, and the going for many miles is, at best, worse than that on loose chalk-land at the breaking of a long frost. There is a sensation of death in all this spongy land, which exudes water and salt round your heel; and nothing serves to dispel it—not the many birds, shocking in their tameness as the beasts seen by Alexander Selkirk; not the myriad insects which assail the traveller who is luckless enough to ride down-wind; not the teeming life of the ditches; not the half-wild buffaloes, strayed from southern farmsteads, which you may startle from their wallows and send souging knee-deep through the slime; not even that vivifying force of Egypt, the ruffling north wind, tirelessly bowing the strident reeds. Yet with all its monotony and deadness the land exhilarates the traveller; for the breeze blows hard and clear off the sea and the salt lagoons to northward—hard and clear, in Stevenson's phrase, as through the rigging of a ship—and the flats have the mysterious attraction which is common to all great levels of free horizon.

The vast soapy bogs, and even wider expanses of permanent inundation, are fed by the waste of drains and canals which spring far up the Delta and expire at last unregarded under the face of the dunes; and by a network of forgotten waterways of Ptolemaic and Roman date, wandering now unguided through the marsh. To meet with one of these in a day's journey is to

lose many an hour in seeking a ford through the deep silt from one crumbling bank to another, and to endure no mean discomfort stripped under a noonday sun for the benefit of mosquitoes. Only too rarely will you obtain passage in the log-boat of a marshman, descended from some outlawed refugee, who spends his days in fishing and his nights prone under a beehive of reeds and mud, which might have sheltered a lake-dweller of the Neolithic age. Heliodorus mentions boats 'rudely hewed out of the rough tree' which crept about the channels, and on his excursions from Alexandria about the year 400, he probably saw scenes little different from those which offer themselves in the fenland in the present year of grace.

That I was able in the long run to visit every spot to which I had a mind, in a country where the obvious road is usually the least possible, I owed mainly to the guides, horses, mules—even steam launches—put at my disposal by the *Société Anonyme du Behêra*. The advent of this great corporation is the modern event of most importance in these wilds. With a seat in Alexandria, a Board composed of most of the nationalities represented in that polyglot city, a British managing director, formerly in high place in the Egyptian Department of Public Works, and a staff of young Britons, Frenchmen, Italians, Greeks, Copts, Armenians, Jews, and what not, this company is achieving the reconquest of the marsh-land, and every year the smoke of its traction-engines rises nearer the lagoons. Its work is worth the notice of every geographer interested in the modification of the world's surface by man, and the approval of everyone concerned with the economic development of weaker races through the capital and enterprise of the stronger. The Society began where the local magnates of Kafres-Sheikh and Belkas, once called 'Little Kings of Berari,' had been forced to leave off, in despair of the sourness and saturation of the soils. The larger canals and drains had been cut and embanked through the ooze by Government labour; but the Society had to construct the lesser, and, that done, to attack certain of the nearer and higher-lying lands with great harrows, which tear and distribute the soapy hummocks, and with steam-ploughs, which open the surface to the drying wind and sun. Washed with sweet Nile water, the slime was found capable of bearing rice and barley for one year or two, and, purged by such crops, would send up here and there clover in the third season, and even a remunerative yield of cotton. Presently the local husbandmen living in villages to

southward were induced to take leases, and ere long to buy, while the steam-engines moved on into the marsh. In ten years the company has built three great model farms and many smaller ones; levelled and restored to cultivation thousands and thousands of acres; abolished a third of all the marsh in Berari, and caused population to return to a region where, a generation ago, the lone Coptic Convent of the Apparition of Our Lady to St. Guemiana was the last outpost of man. Moreover, native land-owners have now learned something of the Society's methods, and far out in the swamps many a farm-oasis has been called into being where till lately all was salt and ooze and sand.

The process of reclamation is a rapid one, designed to secure a quick return, and the land is made rather a possible than a very sound soil, for there is little fall and the draining is hardly more than superficial. But so much amelioration is enough for the native husbandmen, and it seems as much as, in a phrase of economics, the 'local traffic will bear.'

Not because it was designed to that end, nor because it is prosecuted with any but a strictly commercial purpose, to make cent. per cent. for shareholders, this sort of reclamation does, indeed, effect more for local civilisation than any Western enterprise with which I am familiar in the Nearer East. By its knowledge and capital this Behéra Society raises large tracts of land out of a desolation in which small agriculturists would have had to leave them for ever; and since it aims, not to retain these, but to hand them over to the native, improved up to the point at which he will be capable of dealing with them, it creates no alien *latifundia*. Small holdings multiply in the wake of its steamers, a fact which in itself implies no small economic and social gain, and native human effort is encouraged to continue and achieve the local conquest of natural conditions. The civilisation so promoted remains one of purely native spring and character. An indigenous population is attracted at last into a region long lapsed to wilderness, and there it is induced by the building of hamlets, the making of roads and bridges, and the establishment of periodic markets, to form a settled, stable, and self-helping society—all, if you will, to the great profit of an alien corporation, but obviously to the still greater profit of the land of Egypt.

Raised even at this day less than a metre at most above sea level, impossible to drain thoroughly by any natural water-flow,

sodden with all the salts of Nile, wild, untenanted, seeming, if any on earth,

A waste land where no man comes,  
Nor hath come, since the making of the world,

the Nile fen, nevertheless, is full of human memorials. There are few sights more astonishing than that of mounds, covering nearly two score of buried towns, in that water-logged desolation; and I am still at a loss to explain how so large a population, dependent presumably for the most part on agriculture, came to settle and subsist there in an age to which pumps and any but the simplest methods of drainage were unknown. That it practised agriculture and did not live by fishing alone, is abundantly proved by the maze of old irrigation channels and drains about the mounds. You may even descry here and there, on the higher parts of the present marsh, a trace of ridge and furrow. In the main the culture must have been of cereals. Since Egypt, as is well known, was long the main feeder of the city of Rome, it need surprise no one that every arable inch in the Nile Valley should have been pressed to produce. Wheat, and doubtless on the salter lands barley, must have paid the Delta cultivator in those days at least as well as cotton does now. But it should not be forgotten that he made a profit also in Imperial times out of other cultures long forgotten in Egypt, such as those of the vine and olive. From the first was produced, in the marsh-land of Mareotis, a wine celebrated in the Roman world; and there are sufficient remains of oil presses lying on the surface of the Berari mounds to prove the former existence of olive groves in the locality. But how to explain such cultures in such a district? The experienced Europeans now engaged in reclaiming it are convinced that they would be impossible now, owing to the excessive saturation and salinity; and, indeed, one can hardly avoid belief in some subsequent subsidence of the land, such as, indeed, may be proved to have actually taken place not very far away, where the foundations of Ptolemaic palaces are to be seen awash in the eastern bay of Alexandria.

It is certain, however, not only, as my tentative digging proved, from the elevation of the towns on artificial mounds, but also from the very little that can be learned of the district in ancient writings, that it was always to some extent a fen. More than once in history rebels against the Egyptian Pharaohs found security in the northern swamps; and the holy city Buto, whose oracle and festival are mentioned by Herodotus, is said to

have lain on the edge of a great marsh. Its site, perhaps the most important still not certainly identified in Lower Egypt, was somewhere in the south-west of the fen region; and a probable site has been found on the great mounds of Farain, a few miles north of the Berari railway and ten from the east bank of the Rosetta Nile. Moreover, there is that actual description of a great tract of swamp and islands in this part of Egypt left by Heliodorus. His dainty romance of the loves of Theagenes and Charicleia, the best and almost the only novel in ancient Greek, which is said (probably without truth) to have drawn down on its episcopal author the censure of a startled synod, thus describes the marshes (I quote the rendering of the Elizabethan translator, Underdowne):—

The whole place is called the Pasture of the Egyptians, about the which is a lowe valley, which receiveth certaine exundations of Nylus, by means whereof it becometh a poole, and is in the midst very deepe, about the brimmes whereof are marishes or fennes. For looke, as the shore is to the Sea, such is the Fennes to every great Poole. In that place have the theeves of Egypt, how many soever they bee, their common wealth. And for as much as there is a little land without the water, some live in small cottages, others in boates which they use as wel for their house as for passage over the poole. In these doe their women serve them, and if neede require, be also brought to bedde. When a child is borne first, they let him sucke his mother's milk a while, but after they feede him with fishes taken in the lake and roased in the hoate sunne. And when they perceive that he beginnes to goe, they tie a cord about his legs, and suffer him but onely to goe about the boate. . . . Moreover the great plenty of reede that groweth there in the Moozy ground is in a manner as good as a bulwark to them. For by devising many crooked and cumbrous wayes, through which the passage to *them* by oft use is very easie, but to *others* hard, they have made it as a sure defence, that by no sudden invasion they may be endammaged.

This description, however, refers only to the extreme north of the present marsh-land, where still exist great lagoons and a large amphibious population of fish-eaters; where, too, are the sites of several settlements of Ptolemaic and Roman times, half buried in the shifting dunes of the sea-board. It is the inland or southern half of the region that, in its present state, looks so little fit ever to have been inhabited by man. Nevertheless, you may nowhere travel far there without happening on his handiwork. His ancient ports, his half-silted canals, with broken dykes, lurk in all quarters, making an evil harbourage for insects and traps for the sanguine explorer who thinks to take a bee-line from point to point; but not infrequently they will lead you, if your purpose be to see ancient sites, straight to the mounds, to which they once carried traffic and sweet water. Arrived, you will find the profile of the dusty *tell* broken by no imposing ruin, for in this region the Roman builders used little but brick, and the most of that



unbaked. But the surface will be strewn with vitreous slags, left by the Arabs, who have burnt what stone there was for lime; with fragments of decaying glass, whose iridescence vies with the brilliant oxides on scraps of copper pans or tools or almost illegible coins, which range from the later Ptolemies to the Byzantine and even early Arab times; with sherds of rotten blue faience and earthenware, painted or plain, but all of the commoner kinds. In short, it offers but poor loot in return for all your labour through bog and soapy sand. Nor will you get much more by digging at a venture, for these mounds are made mostly of little adobe houses, piled one on another, their contents long ago rotten with salt; and below them you must hack through some feet of empty sand, compounded by rain and pressure to the consistency of asphalt, which has been piled upon the lowest ruins to make a dry bed for later habitations, to find at the bottom nothing better than a heap of black Nile mud, brought together by the first builders to raise the town at its foundation above the damp level of the surrounding flats. Now and again the newly come natives, who dig in these mounds, on their own behalf or that of the Behéra Society, for the virgin earth, containing a suspicion of nitre, which exists on all ancient sites in Egypt, or for ready-made kiln-dried bricks of Roman times, turn up drums or capitals of small columns, an inscription or two, or even such a sculptured Roman head as is now kept by the Society at Kum Wahal. But those are rare rewards, and you will more probably have to be content with the stirring of your imagination. These desolate trophies of a dominance over Nature, carried to a point to which our own age is now painfully trying to attain, are the trophies of Imperial Rome. I have done what I can to identify those little lost towns, and I find among them two capitals of provinces in the time of Hadrian, three Byzantine bishoprics, and as many towns that were not episcopal sees but have left a name in the early Arab history of Egypt. But all were most obscure places. The wonder is, not that great towns stood here, but any towns at all.

These mounds of the North Delta are disposed in three chains, running from south to north, which seem to align the courses of two of the lost ancient Niles, the *Thermuthiac* (or *Pharmuthiac*) and the *Athribitic*, and that of a central main canal, now known as the Bahr Kassed. There have been considerable changes in the courses of the Delta Niles. For instance, the westernmost, the Great Nile, or *Agathodaemon*, which used to flow

out near Canopus (Aboukir), now flows only down the bed of what was a secondary stream, the *Taly*, and issues at the old Bolbitinic estuary, the modern Rosetta mouth. It is curious to note how utterly the traces of its ancient channel have been effaced in about a thousand years. It used to pass by the Greek city of Naukratis, and there perhaps its course can still be traced in the hollow between the site and a small mound, which is evidently the remains of a heaped-up bank such as would have aligned the river. The *Thermuthiac* and *Athribitic* Niles are now represented respectively by the canalised Bahr Nashart and the Bahr Tirah, but the modern streams do not run continuously in the old beds. The actual Athribitic channel I discovered in mid-marsh, sweeping past a chain of mounds; it has long been dry, but its dykes still remain, defining a bed about 350 feet wide.

So much for the true marsh-land. North of it lies the lagoon district, fenced from the sea by a broad belt of dunes. It shows in most respects a sharp contrast to the fens, being a region comparatively rich and populous, and of very old settlement; but it is neither less remote, nor better known to the casual tourist in Egypt. Nor is it one whit less interesting, for nowhere in the Nile land is to be seen a region more primitive, or a more recent contact of aboriginal Eastern folk and Western in-comers. Here the two elements still meet almost as strangers, each unalloyed by the other. Indeed, with the seaward part of the district it may still be said that the European has nothing to do. If once in many moons a British inspector of coastguard or canal outfalls pay a flying visit, he will be stared at a moment and forgotten, like some strange bird that has lighted suddenly on the lagoons.

To reach the lakes you must descend one of the greater canals of the Central Delta before the summer dryness in a boat of the lightest draught, and, leaving the last of the locks far behind, pass beyond all habitations of Nile husbandmen into an amphibious Limbo, in doubt between land and water where no life of man abides continually. Soon the canal dykes cease on either hand, and the banks fall to a few inches in height. Let your boat slip on a mile or two more. The flood brims bank high, its wavelets slop on to the land, and, lo! you find there is no longer land either to right or left, behind or before. Undefined by any line of coast, Egypt has slid at the last under her own waters and become invisible at less than a mile away, and the voyager finds himself adrift on a sea, seeming limitless, so low are its shores,

and bottomless, so turbid are its harassed waves. Yet, in fact, if a tall man let himself down into any part of the great area of this lake the surface will scarcely rise to his armpit.

Holding on its course, the boat passes at once out of that dead world of the fen into one of singular life, a life not of land any longer, but water, whereof forewarning was given some miles up the canal at the last settlement of man. There fishing nets hang to wind and sun, and a little fleet of keelless craft collects any afternoon while a Copt sells its draught of fish at auction. The catch of each crew is offered as a whole. A salesman squatting over the mat stirs the palpitating heap to work the larger fish to the top; a fat one he picks out and puts by in a palm-leaf pannier for the auctioneer, a second for the writer, a third for himself. The rest is bid for at prices ranging from ten to forty piastres, sold, packed on asses, and despatched to feed the marshmen for many miles around. You will not sail a mile on the lake unamazed at its scaly wealth. Silvery bodies leap by tens and twenties from the ochrous surface, and the water boils with the passing of shoals. Boats at anchor, boats adrift with trailing nets, boats under full sail, multiply as one goes north and east, till all the loneliness of the Limbo is forgotten. All round the horizon spring groves of perpendicular poles crossed by poles oblique, the masts and lateen yards of invisible hulls, moored by invisible islets whose sandy levels are all but awash. I know not how many craft ply on Lake Burullos, but the tale must run into hundreds and that of the fisher folk to thousands—the latter of a blond type dignified with some of that energy and reserve which are seldom altogether wanting to men whose business is on great waters. I had neither opportunity nor occasion to study them closely, but received a clear impression of their racial antiquity. The general type of features seems to be that sharply marked and over refined sort which one associates with an old inbred race, and the women often reminded me strongly of the characteristic type on the Egyptian monuments. An anthropometrist might find not a little to interest him in this remote and secluded corner of the Nile Valley.

The new land does not begin to rise on the north-eastern horizon till a dozen barren islets have slipped astern. First emerge the higher dunes, uplifted in a shimmering mirage, rose and yellow like low cumulus clouds touched by sunset. These run one into another till they become a continuous range, spotted with black tufts, which are the plumes of half-buried palms. A cluster of huts to left with certain upstanding blocks is the

village of Borg, with its dismantled fort and coastguard station, situated on all that remains of the Sebennyitic estuary of the Nile. A rank odour of curing comes down the wind, for there are dried the putrescent fish on which half the poor of Lower Egypt live. To right and ahead, as you wear round the last island and set a course due east, a large dark stain resolves itself into a little town with a minaret or two set on a hillock and backed by the golden dunes and the palms. A forest of naked masts and yards lies out on the lake; it is the fleet of Baltim, the chief settlement of the Burullos fisher-folk, and old episcopal see of *Parallos*, whose sound, corrupted on Arab lips, makes the modern name.

So flat is the lake floor that a great way from the margin the water is still but inches deep, and the grounded *feluccas* discharge their freight on to the backs of camels, which are trained against Nature both to receive their loads standing and to plash unconcerned a mile out in the inland sea. So far out also as to be dimly seen, naked children roam all day and every day, plying in either hand tiny javelins or little casting-nets, fishing as their first forefathers fished; and I have seen no healthier or happier babies than this amphibious brood, whose playground is the lagoon. The fathers and mothers also seem to pass their days *al fresco* on the great expanse of sandy beach, cooping boats, buying and selling fish, chattering, sleeping in the sun. It is astonishing in Egypt to see any life so clean. Here is no longer the Nile mud, a viscous ink when wet and a fouling dust if dry, but the purest ruin of calcareous rocks. Even the huts are not clay-built, but of ancient Roman bricks dug out of the mounds that lie to south of the lagoon, and long ago mellowed to a dusky red which harmonises to admiration with the yellow dunes and the palms. Less solid beehive shelters, byres, and fences are plaited of dry palm-fronds.

It is a most singular bit of Egypt, this long sand-belt, which fences the northern sea—made, for the most part, one must suppose, of the detritus of a barrier range of prehistoric islands, themselves compact of such a soft limestone as that on which Alexandria is built. Coming into it out of the great Nile-flats, one thinks it a veritable highland, and climbing painfully over the sliding dunes hardly notes that every deeper hollow falls again to the Nile level. Yet so it is; and therefore palms may be planted deep, and they will bear abundantly, though the dunes, in their constant eastward progression, bury them to the

spring of their plumes. In the troughs of the sand-waves potatoes and tomatoes are grown behind long alignments of sheltering wattles; nor is a wild waxy pasture wanting, whose roots trail to incredible length, even to fifty or sixty feet, through the sand to seek the ground moisture which somewhere will not fail them. You may find a similar tract by taking train from Alexandria towards Rosetta, and see a village like Baltim in Edku by its lake; but there is no view west of the Nile to rival that from the higher dunes of Burullos; nothing like that great forest of sand-choked palms in the hollow that lies between the lake dunes and the higher golden range by the open sea; nothing like the ample prospect of the Lake Burullos itself, with its northern fringe of fisher-settlements, its beach alive with fishing-folk, and its waters dotted with their hulls and sails. It is no longer familiar Egypt, as one knows it, but a land of even more primæval life and even less change.

The agents of change, however, are abroad, and the time is not far off when the limits of cultivation will be pushed northward as far as the southern shores of the lake. That is as far as they were pushed eighteen hundred years ago by Imperial Rome. And perhaps the time is not so much farther off when the lake itself will be cut off from the sea and its bed drained and parcelled out into arable plots, suffering the same change that in the past ten years has come over the lagoon of Aboukir and now threatens that of Edku. The severest critics of British rule in Egypt admit that at least it has resulted in certain ameliorations of the lot of the agricultural Egyptian—in his having better security of tenure and a larger enjoyment of the fruits of his labour. Nor, again, is it denied that we are improving his food and the sanitary conditions under which he has to live. We may fairly take credit, then, (if credit there be) for two consequences of these ameliorations—for the steady increase in population and the obvious growth of a land-hunger among the people. The one is pushing a growing proportion of the *fellahin* out of their native villages, the other inducing the surplus to make, not for the towns, but for the unappropriated arable lands. The vacuum which sucks that surplus nowadays is the Northern Delta. There alone, in the strait and teeming valley of the Nile, is yet room and to spare; and there will be seen in the near future the greatest expansion and modification of Nature by man.

## THE FRANKFORT FLEET.

ONCE and only once in history has there been a real parliament of professors: it met in a church in Germany, and it meant to reform the world—through the medium of Germany. The events which produced this political phenomenon are as a rule practically unknown to even well-informed Englishmen; and yet they had much to do with the formation of that great industrial and political Germany which bulks so large in our national outlook to-day. There was a real revolution in the Fatherland in 1848. It was not indeed, a 'fool-fury of the Seine': there were no 'noyades,' no theatrical slayings of princes, no 'thermidors,' and no 'émigrés' to speak of. The worst penalty exacted from recalcitrant princes was that of a compulsory stay in England: which was after all a great deal better for themselves and for the purses of their subjects than the usual season at Spa or Homburg. But there was a very real and very righteous uprising of a people oppressed by feudal follies and petty despotisms to an extent which we can hardly conceive nowadays to have existed within the memory of men yet living.

The wave of rebellion broke, as it seemed, ineffectually against the iron power of Prussia—selfishness, both national and individual,<sup>1</sup> had robbed it of its force; and the crushing of the revolution was far more bloody than the inception of it. But in this harmless *Jacquerie* the principal instigators had most undoubtedly been the professors. Ordinary and extraordinary, they had boldly faced the extremities of persecution for the propagation of doctrines of liberty which seemed like a sick man's dreams to many who heard. The present Imperial Government is credited with deft ways of dealing with recalcitrant educators; but its methods are as whips to the scorpions with which the petty potentates of the

<sup>1</sup> The writer had once the honour of the acquaintance of an insurgent captain of '48; he was a prosperous Bavarian innkeeper in '80. 'I led my troops,' he said, 'to the field of battle,' and he sighed. 'And what then?' 'I left them there.' 'You left them there?' 'Naturally; I was a married man with children: most of my men were young.' 'And what happened to them?' 'Ach, die armen, armen Leute!' he said, 'the Prussians took them out and set them up against a wall, and shot them all. Ach! die armen Leute!' and he wept. He was probably referring to the so-called battle of Ubstadt—a mere massacre.

'twenties and 'thirties chastened their instructors of youth. The only protection for such was in the jealousy of the little States. Each had its 'national' university, whose teachers could do no wrong; but for a free-speaking professor of Jena to adventure a few miles' walk across the country into Prussia might be, to say the least, ill-advised. Yet for their fanciful theories and their real, honest hopes of liberty they fought hard. And when for a time the Michels and Sepps of the south and the Schmidts and Müllers of the north had it all their own way, it was no wonder that they exercised their vote—that vote which was to give all the world to everyone—in favour of the professors.<sup>1</sup>

The old Diet, which had, indeed, become somewhat of a comic-opera institution, would disappear, and in its place there was to be a real parliament—on the model of that of the great Mother of Parliaments, at that time at the height of her reputation as such. And if, it was plausibly argued, the unscientific merchants and unlettered squires of England had brought her government near to perfection, surely the collective learning and science of so lettered and scientific a land as Germany might attain that perfection absolutely. Wherefore it came to pass that there was a parliament of savants, which in the fearless Continental fashion took possession of a church in Frankfort for its sittings, and determined to inaugurate an era of universal peace and goodwill. Some of its members (to use Anglo-American speech) were 'cranks'; and a few were, most unfortunately, 'crooks.' Yet as a rule they were honest men, and they set themselves honestly to work to do with pen and paper what Blood and Iron only did with difficulty twenty-two years later—to make a nation out of scrambling items. With most of their well-meaning plans we are little concerned: one should be of exceeding interest to us of the present day at the present moment. They undertook to form a real fleet for the Fatherland.

Now, we are prone to believe that we have seen in our own times the entire development not only of the German navy, but of the German mercantile marine. Nothing can be more remote from truth. To pass over all earlier records of Teutonic prowess by sea, which are plentiful enough, we find in the sixteenth century the Fuggers of Germany, with a rare insight into commercial possibilities revived only three centuries later, fixing their eyes upon

<sup>1</sup> The exact numbers of the Parliament were: actual professors, 95; Doctors of Philosophy, &c., 81; editors, 14; clergymen, 17; lawyers, 200—out of a total number of 552. There were only 23 merchants and 16 manufacturers.



South America—governing for a time, and almost annexing as a private principality, Venezuela; only expelled from it by short-sighted Spanish selfishness. We find the Great Elector of Brandenburg colonising Guinea a hundred years later, building forts, making a trade in ivory, in gold, and, above all, in slaves, receiving even an embassy of negroes in Berlin. But the time when despotism could make a fleet had not yet come. The jealous Dutchmen called out their subjects, who formed the backbone of the Elector's crews; and the colony, without help from the sea, found no sufficient substitutes in majors and sergeant-majors of the Brandenburg type, and ceased to be either interesting or profitable; in 1720 the father of the great Frederick sold his rights to the Dutch West India Company for 7,200 ducats, and spent the money on his 'dear blue children,' the giants of the guard.

Frederick himself had had great naval schemes: at one time he had possession of East Friesland—one of the few provinces which Prussia has ever held and relinquished—and thought to make a base of naval power there; but Russia, Sweden, and Denmark swept the northern seas. Frederick's poor fleet of 'frigates,' galleys, and nondescripts was caught in shallow water near Ueckermünde on September 10, 1759, by a hostile fleet consisting of four galleys of forty-four oars, two 'bomb-galliot,' eight 'half galleys,' a 'yacht,' a hospital-ship, and a tender, with eight smaller craft. In spite of lack of experience and inferiority in numbers, the Prussian commanders defended themselves bravely; and it was not till the guns of their own captured vessels were turned upon them that they gave way and fled. It was the last German sea-fight for nearly a century, and the composition of the fleets sufficiently shows the backwardness of naval science in the Baltic. England and France were at this very time launching against each other, not 'yachts' and 'half galleys,' but magnificent ships of the line in scores. Within a few weeks after Ueckermünde forty-four such great ships were striving for mastery amid the howling tempests of Quiberon Bay.

Prussia turned sullenly back to the land. Partitions of Poland were more to her taste than bickerings with Sweden on the high seas. One such partition left within her borders, but not under her sway, the 'Queen of the Vistula,' Danzig, the ancient imperial free city, the centre of the Hanseatic trade of her corner of the Baltic—the city which in 1650 had captured off her own harbour the savage Marshal Königsmark, Swedish governor of Bremen

and scourge of North Germany, and held him fast. By deliberate and systematic annoyance and persecution, Prussia succeeded in so harassing the trade of the free town that in 1793, when another partition treaty gave her her victim, the trade which had made the city so tempting a prize had almost disappeared. In 1839 there were but fifty-nine vessels, great and small, which claimed the Queen of the Vistula as their mother-port.

Such diminution of trade did not prevail throughout Germany. The loss of the Dutch colonies and fleet—both fallen into the voracious maw of the islanders—the opening of the Scheldt, and the general, if informal, blockade of all save German coasts by the English fleets, threw a vast amount of trade into the hands of the German merchants. Nor did the savage oppression of Hamburg by Davoust, or the Berlin and Milan decrees, or even the actual annexation by France of all the North Sea coasts, avail to check the growth of the mercantile marine of Germany. Heligoland was a hot-bed of contraband traffic. The 'letters of marque,' which enabled any tradesman of Goole or Lynn or Yarmouth who could buy a stout smack, a brass gun, and half a dozen desperate lives from the waterside to 'sink, burn, and destroy,' were granted freely to British subjects of the most questionable type. A desire to rid his Britannic Majesty's continental dominions of French invaders was accepted as convincing proof of nationality. Many a fortune was made on Baltic and North Sea coasts, not so much in defiance of, as in consequence of, the decrees which were to cripple the nation of shopkeepers for ever. The German mercantile marine grew and grew, until in 1848 it numbered 6,800 vessels of 896,000 tons, a total inferior only to those of Great Britain and the United States. Hamburg's trade in 1847 exceeded thirty millions, and that of Bremen eleven millions; yet this vast merchant fleet had practically not a single warship to call upon for help in case of an outbreak of hostilities near or far.

Such an object-lesson was promptly forthcoming. Indeed, war had broken out before the professors met, and that in a form peculiarly calculated to rouse German susceptibility. To talk of the Schleswig-Holstein wars now is to arouse a memory, not yet quite extinguished, of shameless Prussian rapacity satisfied at the expense of a country just united to our own by sacred domestic ties, of the infraction of a treaty concluded in and named after our own capital, of cynical indifference displayed by our own statesmen with regard to that infraction, and of the gallant defence made by

a tiny nation against cruel odds. But the war, or rather rebellion, of Schleswig and Holstein in 1848 was a very different affair, Whom the debatable duchies really belonged to, if not to Denmark, is a matter for historical pedants, and whoso will may read their complicated and not over-interesting story in a learned monograph by Sir Travers Twiss. But one thing is quite certain, and that is that the power which now holds them has not, and never had, the slightest right to them. They had long been a kind of Ireland to Denmark, though with very few grievances to complain of; and no sooner had the revolutionary fever begun to spread from France into Germany than the duchies intimated to their *de facto* monarch, the liberal-minded Frederick VII., their desire for their own corporate union with the new German confederation, which was not entirely unlike a request of Ireland for corporate union with the United States. But, unreasonable as the thing seemed, the new Germany jumped at the proposition: here were two German-speaking duchies—they were really so only to the extent of about one-third—reft from their fatherland by tyrants; they must be rescued and restored; a war for such a purpose seemed to the exalted Teuton of the time a crusade for the delivery of a 'Germania Irredenta.' Prussia was not found wanting here, as in so many patriotic enterprises. The few score miles of coast of Schleswig and Holstein were worth, in respect of harbours and marine facilities, all the Baltic and North Sea coasts of Germany; and of the total of 6,000 merchant ships given above, the two duchies contributed 2,795. Decidedly, here was a case for philanthropic interference.

Not the least element in this fervour of patriotism was the extraordinary hatred of Denmark as a maritime power, which had been transferred to her after the decadence of Sweden. Such hatred, quite out of proportion to that usually earned by the most blustering military power on land, it has always been the fate of naval nations to excite, and perhaps not unnaturally. The movements of land armies can be calculated, foretold, and even spied upon; but when a fleet drops as it were from the clouds, bombards our ports, blows up our arsenals, and even cannonades the flank of our invincible armies, we feel like those upon whom missiles have been dropped from a balloon; it leaves us sore, it hardly seems fair fighting. Of such peculiar unpopularity Athens, Carthage, Venice, and Britain herself have given the world examples, and Denmark formed no exception to the rule.

Encouraged by the openly expressed sympathy of Germany, Schleswig and Holstein broke into open revolt; their population amounted to one-half that of the entire monarchy of Denmark, and they had the questionable advantage of semi-pretenders to the throne in the persons of the Dukes of Augustenburg, whose claims, fostered for her own advantage in 1848, Prussia so cynically swept aside eighteen years after. They took the lead of the insurgents, and presently troops from Germany were poured into the duchies. The course of things was very much what might have been expected, and what repeated itself in our own times. The Danes defended the mainland with desperation—a Moltke being among their commanders—and were gradually forced back into Jutland. Then appeared their real strength. They retired to their unassailable islands; they frustrated with their gunboats—notably at Kiel—every effort to organise a naval force against them; and, worst of all, they maintained an effective blockade of all the German coasts. The German traders fled in all directions, defenceless; they took refuge in English harbours; they sailed under English and Russian colours; they even, suffering greatly in the bargain, sold their vessels to the Russian merchants of the Baltic. But Denmark remained mistress of the seas; and Wrangel, the Prussian commander in Jutland, finding himself powerless in other ways, was preparing, after the manner of his nation, to take revenge by the levying of a war contribution on the hapless mainlanders, when he was suddenly recalled with all his troops.

Cries of 'Perfidious Albion!' 'Treacherous Palmerston!' arose from the disappointed patriots. And, indeed, Albion and Palmerston, no doubt, had a good deal to do with this remarkable change in affairs; but probably Russia had even more influence. Bound to Holstein by dynastic ties, she could ill brook the idea of the duchy falling into the maw of Prussia; and the sudden interest taken in the war by Sweden, where there was talk of sending an army corps to Copenhagen to protect the islands, raised fears of a Scandinavian confederacy which might ask questions about Finland. What the exact truth as to the interference was we must wait for a good many years to learn. What is certain is that an armistice, which might become a peace, was concluded at Malmö, in Sweden, by the terms of which the Prussian troops were withdrawn from Jutland, and Germans and Danes remained watching one another for months in Holstein with occasional sanguinary quarrels. But in Frankfort the dismay was great; the professors were to learn

that they were only the fly on the wheel after all, and that if it suited European diplomacy that the duchies should remain part of Denmark, all their formal recognition of them as independent States would go for nothing. Worst of all, the blockade of the German coasts by the Danish fleets continued. The situation was intolerable. Already early in the war there had sprung up in every seaport town 'Fleet Committees' and 'Marine Councils,' and so soon as the Parliament was really constituted these pressed upon that body the necessity of organising a fleet for the new confederation. The professors were delighted at the idea of something which seemed to them, after their childish attempts at constitution-making (with which we are not concerned), quite a practical task. They began well: experts were despatched—notably one of singularly un-German name, Syndicus Banks, of Hamburg—to buy ships in England, and to gain there general information on naval affairs. But the experts were all too slow for the Parliament. On May 31, 1848, a marine congress at Hamburg fixed the number of the future fleet at eight sailing frigates of sixty guns, four of forty guns, six screw frigates, and six paddle 'corvettes'—a name ever dear to the German marine. The duties of the fleet, the details of its equipment, and in particular those of the uniform of its officers, were all minutely prescribed, and all went merrily until there arose the question of thalers. The fleet was to cost six millions of these; and the Parliament had no difficulty in fixing the proportion of this sum to be paid by each German State, great and small. The difficulty arose when these contributions had to be levied. The smaller States, indeed, showed a most patriotic spirit. Hanover, Oldenburg, Anhalt, Waldeck, and the ever-ready little State of Nassau, paid their shares readily; but Austria bluntly refused; and Prussia, 'smiling, put the question by.' Yet unsolicited contributions from all parts of the world came freely in, and the names of the communities represented show how cosmopolitan German traders had already become. Buenos Ayres sent 5,000 gulden, the towns of Tuscany 1,000, the Germans in London 6,000, and those of Manila 650. Nor was patriotism confined to districts directly affected by maritime troubles. The Bavarian peasants contributed 15,000 gulden, to be applied to the construction of a single gunboat, to be named the *Wendelstein*.

On August 21, 1848, it was announced to the Parliament and its poor old figurehead, the Archduke John of Austria, who had been dragged from his books to become Regent of an empire which

did not exist, that Germany possessed a real fleet consisting of one frigate, the *Deutschland*, of thirty-two guns, bought from a private owner in Hamburg; one sailing corvette, the *Franklin*—a present from another Hamburger, Herr Sloman; three steamers, and a gunboat named the *Saint Paul*, after the Hamburg suburb which had purchased and equipped it. Lübeck had also built and fitted out a gunboat; but it rotted at its moorings, and the rest might almost as well have been left to do the same. For of all the imposing fleet on paper here described there remained in April 1849, when the truce of Malmö came to an end and war was renewed, one vessel only really seaworthy, and that one, the *Deutschland*, according to the report of one of the few honest servants of the revolutionary government, fit only for a training-ship. Sloman's gift seems to have disappeared altogether; and the rest were either under repair or incapable of it. Prussia alone was making any real naval progress. She had a few months later at least two more corvettes and some forty gunboats. But the German fleet, *qua* German fleet, was an all but confessed failure already.

'We told you so,' said the maritime Powers, in whom this fiasco tended to strengthen the belief (held in defiance of, or in ignorance of, historical facts) that Germans never could make good sailors or Germany build up an efficient fleet. And this was expressed with brutal frankness in some quarters. Mr. Punch, for example, who, in spite of occasional aberrations, generally manages to represent roughly the prejudices and likings of his fellow-countrymen, poured forth the vials of his ridicule upon the poor aspirants for maritime glory—the 'Little Fatherland lubbers'; and this was not calculated to encourage good feeling among neighbours, who already believed 'Palmerston' to be the author of all European evils, from the Spanish marriages onward.

Certainly the foolish theorists who were tinkering away at constitutions in St. Paul's Church were doing their best to deserve ridicule. But the credit of German fighting power, if not exactly her naval ability, was re-established by an action which may be fitly described as marvellous in character and results—the defeat and capture of a squadron carrying at least 150 guns, of heavy calibre for the period, by a land battery or land batteries mounting twelve. It was, indeed, an extraordinary engagement. A Danish fleet, composed of one magnificent new ship of the line, *Christian VIII.*, a smaller ship, called after the wily manner of our American cousins a 'frigate,' but in reality another liner, two

steamers, and several smaller craft, sailed into the harbour of Eckernförde, situated practically between Schleswig and Holstein, on the morning of April 5, 1849, two days only after the renewal of hostilities. What they meant to do is not quite clear; there was no naval port to be assailed, no fortified town to be bombarded, and they seem to have had no troops on board to land. There were only two batteries of earth—their contrivers had been before their time—mounting respectively eight and four guns—twenty-four pounders or less, and manned by Holsteiners and Nassauers. By noontime the great ships, riddled with balls and crippled in spars, were signalling to their steamers to tow them out of action. It was too late; both towers and towers had become mere marks for the land batteries, without power of reply; and the tugs cast loose and made the best of their way seawards. Land troops, with guns, had come up to the help of the Holsteiners, and after a vain effort to renew the engagement, the *Christian VIII.* slowly drifted on to the shallows, helpless and on fire. The other vessel, the *Gefion*, also struck her flag at six o'clock, and the Holsteiners were hurrying to take possession of both when the great ship blew up, with all on board who had not escaped to land, including the heroic commander of one battery, who was endeavouring to save the enemy's sailors who remained in the ship. The *Gefion* was triumphantly carried off, to be an ornament of the newly formed German fleet, and her name is still honourably preserved in the imperial navy.

This real victory, which demonstrated once for all the indispensableness of steam for inshore naval operations, gave an impulse to the halting policy of the assembly at Frankfort in respect of its naval policy; but the poor old 'Pauls-church parliament' was now discredited and despised, and in a few months it came to an ignominious end. It had been well-meaning; it had undoubtedly been patriotic; it had in the main been honest. But it had been hopelessly unpractical, and, above all, it had never had the power of the purse; nay, it was unable to control the incredible follies of local jealousy between States which, a few years before, for example, had led the Darmstadtters to send a flotilla down the Rhine from Mainz to Biebrich, to block up the Nassauers' one harbour by pitching stones into the river.

There followed a somewhat more efficient body, the 'Central Committee of the German Confederation,' which took up the question of the fleet warmly, and declared its possible dissolution most



deleterious to German interests; and for its maintenance spasmodic efforts were made in the course of the next year or two, first by one authority, then by another; unfortunately never by all at once. The Dresden conference (another experimental body) 'decreed' 750,000 gulden for the support of the fleet for five months only; even this was not forthcoming. Then came the restored German Diet, and therein Prussia, which had now a skeleton navy of her own, moved for 'urgency' with small result. Hanover had even less success in the same cause, though from the Hanoverian memorandum it might appear that the existing fleet was a model of equipment, and its *personnel* a splendid example of discipline and enthusiasm. The one thing wanting, according to this document, was a recognised national flag, the want of which had exposed the fleet to contemptuous treatment on the part of brutal foreign admirals, and might even result in its being treated as a pirate flotilla. Reference is here made to an action fought on June 4, 1849, of which the only certain fact recorded is that no single shot fired on either side hit anything. Presumably the chasing of the Danes out of the mouth of the Elbe by Brommy, the German 'admiral,' is meant; it was a gallant little engagement enough, but no lives were lost.

It was now Austria's turn to contribute to the gaiety of nations, and at first sight her proposal seems farcical almost. 'Germany cannot maintain one navy,' she said; 'then try three.' This amazing proposal had at its back some shadow of reason. Austria had a real squadron in the Adriatic, as the Italians found out at Lissa; Prussia had the rudiments of a fleet in the Baltic; if the other States would agree to provide among them a North Sea navy the thing would be done; a triple navy would at once be called into being. But here, as usual, the element of sound and vapour spoiled all. To this 'North Sea fleet' were to be assigned five 'stations': the 'West Indian,' the 'Pacific,' the 'Atlantic,' the 'Chinese,' and the 'Indian Ocean.' This is half as many as are served by the Imperial fleets of Great Britain to-day, and the whole work was to be done by eight vessels—four frigates and four corvettes—all, in spite of the lesson of Eckernförde, apparently sailing ships. The proposal was rejected; yet not so much, we are told, on account of its impracticability as on account of the desperate spirit of 'Particularismus' above alluded to. 'Let the maritime States look to themselves,' said the Diet; and the Nassauers, the victors of Eckernförde, the fellow-countrymen of

the one great Russian admiral of the century before, were the only inland Germans who would help to defend their own coasts. Prussia, it is true, now offered payment of what she should have contributed three years before ; but Austria, in high dudgeon at the rejection of her scheme, refused to pay anything if it were not adopted.

What follows would seem comic if it were not the tragedy of a nation's hopes. On the last day of 1851 the Diet resolved to hand over the fleet to any voluntary society that could be found to take it over as a going concern. No such society could be found to do business on ready-money terms, and the break-up of the fleet became inevitable. Somehow or other, it had increased to some forty vessels, large and small ; and if these were to be sold, who was to receive the price ? Not half the States of Germany had contributed to the construction or maintenance of the fleet, and those who had not must be excluded from the profits of the sale. Among these defaulters was Prussia ; but Prussia was ready to buy two ships, the former Danish frigate *Gefion* and the *Barbarossa* ; for the rest there were no offers at all.

Then Hanover made one last effort to keep the fleet together by summoning a 'North Sea Naval Congress,' from which Prussia and Austria were expressly excluded. About one-third of the remaining States sent deputies ; but these could devise no more practical expedient than the levying of a poll-tax throughout Germany for the maintenance of the navy. Needless to say, no such tax could be raised ; and the Diet now definitely resolved to sell the fleet for what it would fetch. Prussia bought the two ships for which she had previously made offers ; the remainder, or such as had not rotted at their anchorage, were handed over for disposal to a certain Hannibal Fischer, Councillor of Oldenburg, and apparently not otherwise qualified. For seven months he hawked his luckless fleet about from market to market, until at last, in December 1852, the General Steam Navigation Company was induced to buy six 'corvettes' for £33,000—about the cost of their engines. The celebrated frigate *Deutschland* fetched only £1,300, and the whole of the twenty-seven gunboats £1,500—just 4 per cent. of their original cost. But Fischer's methods were deemed too slow ; he was presently superseded by a Captain Weber, who at least did things thoroughly. He got rid of all the rest of the little ships, and then had a kind of gigantic jumble sale of guns and naval stores, ending appropriately enough with the selling of a coffin.

The vessels were dispersed in all directions : some attained to the honourable employ of packet-boats between Bremen and New York, in which capacity the *Germania* (formerly the *Archduke John*) and the *Hansa* ran for many years ; the rest for the most part sank lower yet. The final act in the tragi-comedy seems to be the dismissal from the service, on June 30, 1853, of the brave and capable Brommy, the first, last, and only admiral of the German Confederation.

But the very hour of humiliation proved the beginning of better things. In January 1854 the German States were amazed to learn that Prussia had acquired by private treaty with Oldenburg—always a patriotic and large-minded State—sufficient territory at the mouth of the Jahde to form a passable naval station until Kiel could be acquired for the new national fleet—when it should come. A Prussian fleet there was already ; the ‘sailing corvette’ and two gunboats of 1848 had developed into a squadron of forty-five vessels—mostly gunboats, it is true, but well adapted for operations in the shallow shore-waters of the Baltic and of Friesland. In 1860 the number had increased to eighty-one, including thirty-one small steamers, eight sailing vessels (presumably ‘corvettes’), and forty-two gunboats. From that time onward the development of the fleet becomes matter of contemporary history. It was now a navy, the germ of the great military marine which at this day protects, in yearly increasing strength, the commerce of Germany throughout the world.

Thus has the ‘Little Fatherland lubber’ upset the calculations both of the theorists and the practical observers. To a certain extent, no doubt, the modern German navy is the creation of the deliberate policy of semi-despotic rulers ; but such a creation would have been impossible had there not existed in the nation the maritime instincts of which fifty years ago it was the fashion to deride or deny the existence. Factitious or natural, the growth of merchant marine and navy alike has been remarkable indeed ; and however strong our feelings of rivalry may be at the present crisis in our trade, we cannot deny the meed of generous praise to the nation which so quickly recovered from, and so speedily effaced the memory of, that most heart-sickening of failures—the fiasco of the professors’ fleet of 1848.

A. T. S. GOODRICK.

## *THE SOLDIER AND THE PLAGUE.*

### I.

At the swing gate the soldier paused. He looked behind him, up towards the common, and then down the steep hill ahead ; while the laden donkey he was driving thrust its nose through the wooden bars and blinked profoundly.

'Down the hill we must go, friend,' said the soldier at last, with a sigh. 'Come ; I like it no better than you.'

On their left as they descended there was a high bank, of red earth and gravel ; on their right, the wood. The top of the bank caught the far setting sun, and flushed ruddily. The blackberry bushes were full of blossom, and here and there were beginning to show the hard pink fruit. It was the end of August, and now they would soon be ripe.

At the foot of the hill there was another pause. Again the soldier looked warily about him.

'Let us try the wood,' at length he muttered ; 'and pray God there be no house in the midst of it.'

Swearing under his breath, through a break in the hedge he pulled Neddy, and, stumbling along through the brushwood, soon found a clearing. There he straightened himself and listened intently. In the quiet evening there was not a sound but the drawling gurgle of a brook, the comfortable murmur of a distant wood-pigeon.

There, then, he determined to make his camp for the night, and began to unload his patient companion. The pack was considerable, and was covered with an old torn sail. There was a cooking-pot and a spare pair of boots, a clean shirt, some stockings, and a well-worn buff jerkin ; while, wrapped in paper torn from a large book—of religion, it seemed—there was a quantity of bread and cold bacon, and in the cooking-pot a number of carrots.

He took the sail—it was an old topgallant, and had been presented to him by his master, the Wapping sailmaker, on his determination to quit the plague-stricken city—and soon rigged himself up a shelter. Meantime, the donkey was joyfully rolling and grunting, snapping and crackling the brittle, sun-dried twigs.

'Peace, brute!' growled his master, 'or we shall be sent on the road again.' He thwacked the donkey, and, pulling him on to his feet, tied the reins round a young oak. He fed him with carrots and bread, and, after a meal of bread and bacon and a draught from the brook, sat himself down under the tent to smoke. His ancient dragoon's sword he placed under his knees in case of a surprise.

That he had fallen asleep was certain, for at first the voice mingled with his dreams. It sounded like one of the many summons to get up and be off, the many harsh threats he had suffered from since leaving London, five days before. Suddenly he found himself wide awake, with his pipe cold in his hand, stupidly staring at an old gentleman who was angrily calling something to him from the further side of the brook.

The old gentleman was evidently very angry, and judging his quality from the feathers in his hat and the lace collar he wore, the soldier thought it politic to rise and salute him.

'A masterless man, I warrant you,' shouted the old gentleman; 'and like to set my wood afire with his foul tobacco smoke.'

'Sir,' stuttered the soldier, 'I mean no harm. I come from Newbury, and I merely rest myself'—

'Come hither, rogue,' the old gentleman cried. 'I cannot hear you.'

The soldier advanced to the brook-side, and stood facing his antagonist across the running water. The old gentleman had fierce little eyes and a thin nose, like the breastbone of a spring chicken. His moustache and chin tuft were quite white, and he was deeply pitted with the smallpox.

'Now, wretch!' he snarled, bending forward and curving his hand over his ear. 'Speak up, and tell me no lies.'

Glibly the soldier told his story, the one he always kept for the cavalier gentry, since from his dress and manner he knew the old gentleman must belong to the Court party:—that he was a cast soldier from his late Majesty of Blessed Memory's army, and since Worcester fight—

'In what regiment?' the old gentleman sharply interrupted.

'In my lord King's troop of horse, an't please your honour,' said the soldier, pat.

—Since Worcester fight had returned to his old trade of carpenter; that he had been a carpenter in Newbury a long time, ever since the troubles were ended; but, seeing that the fears of the pestilence

had stopped all house-building, he had been forced to wander abroad in search of work; that he went about from farm to farm and did odd jobs with hurdles and such like, and that at the great houses he was sometimes suffered, through the noble kindness of the gentry:—He was warming to his tale, encouraged by the old gentleman's nods and silence, when he was interrupted sharply with, 'Canst make a cask?'

'Ay, your honour, that I can,' said the soldier heartily; as, indeed, he would have answered if asked whether he could make a fire-engine. Anything, to be left in peace for the night.

'Enough! Never shall it be told that an old soldier of his late Most Sacred Majesty,' said the old gentleman, pompously raising his plumed hat, 'was permitted to pass my door, while I could give him work and he was willing. See, friend; I live at Nizells, over there down the lane, not more than a pistol shot away. Come there in the morning, and say that I, Sir Randolph Cleeve, so ordered it. We shall find you work and food in plenty, I warrant you.'

'I may abide in your honour's wood for to-night?'

'Look how you smoke tobacco, though,' Sir Randolph cried, wagging a finger at him. 'If you raise a fire here I'll have you caught and flayed.'

'God save your honour and your honour's noble family,' crowed the soldier after him, as, with a wave of the hand, the old Cavalier haughtily drew himself up and strutted out of sight among the trees.

Anon, the soldier returned to his bivouac, and, with a queer smile, bent down to relight his pipe. The donkey, lying against the oak tree, twisted his head round solemnly, and as the soldier puffed at the tinder their eyes met.

'Canst make a cask, Neddy?' the soldier chuckled.

In the gathering dusk the lighted tobacco glowed on his bearded face, the heavy lines alongside his nose, the tufted eyebrows in which there bristled a few stiff grey hairs.

## II.

WHEN at last he awoke, the sun was already high. Once or twice in the early morning he had awakened before, but with the sudden pleasant recollection of the old gentleman's permission to sleep there had luxuriously settled himself for another doze. Not

since leaving Wapping, five days ago, had he had so unbroken a night's rest.

Now he guessed it must be about seven o'clock—time, in all conscience, to be starting. Neddy was soon packed and roped round the belly, and soon they were in the lane again.

'Pray heaven,' grumbled the soldier, 'I do not meet the old gentleman. I can make no casks, and after his goodness I would not risk carrying him the plague.'

Down the lane they trudged, that shortly ended in the cross roads. There on the grass plot there was a handing-post, and the soldier was examining it, laboriously spelling out the directions, when a voice called to him—nay, almost screamed :

'Sakes alive ! It's never Amos Bird ?'

The soldier turned, and saw it was an elderly woman, carrying a basket, and with a linen cap on her head.

'Amos Bird ?' she cried. 'Why, thou'rt never master's soldier in the wood ? Yet 'tis thou and thy donkey, sure enough. Why, where be'est going ? Dear heart, that's never the way to Nizells.'

Blinking in the hot sunshine, the soldier looked at her closely as she came towards him, and though the hard face was not altogether unfamiliar—

'Jane Port,' she said, stepping on to the grass beside him. 'Never forgotten Jane Port o' Ramsbury, have 'ee ? Here's a piece o' good fortune, to find the new workman is, arter all, an old friend. Come thy ways to Nizells,' she laughed, 'thou old rascal sweetheart o' mine, and begin thy cask-making. Here be an egg or two ready for breakfast.'

Much more she said, laughing and gabbling, till the soldier broke in upon her harshly.

'Look you, Jane,' he frowned, as he began to have some dim remembrance of the ill-favoured village girl who in his youth had terribly pursued him, 'that tale of mine was all a fudge to quiet the old gentleman and let me stay the night in his wood. I never made a cask in all my life. Besides, I am presently bound to my brother at Devizes.'

'Thy brother can wait,' declared the persistent Jane. 'Here at Nizells be good lodgings ready for 'ee, and passable good food. Why, thou'rt as thin and rusty as an old nail. As for the cask-making, 'tis but a new hoop needed here and there. I've hammered 'em myself ere now. Come thy ways, immejiat.—Hey-up, Neddy !' she screamed. 'If we stay here talking, we'll be sunstrook.' And



before the soldier could prevent her, she had the donkey by the head and was drawing him across the road.

Amos Bird sighed and rubbed his nose, feeling his doubt and his weakness. All the way from London, he had been much pursued and threatened. He had been stoned and beaten to drive him back, always forced to go long ways round, across hedges and ditches, to get on to the high road again; for of all things the country people feared and hated most anyone coming from the stricken city. Nor the farther he fared from London did the opposition grow any less bitter.

And, after all, what chance was there of plague from *him*? He was as sound as any man in England, had never had a day's sickness in his life; while as for the things in his pack, what infection could they be likely to carry, with his constant smoking of tobacco? And so, after but a few moments' doubt and struggle, down the dusty white road and through an opening in the wood, in all docility, he followed the voluble Jane, his compunction vanished and spirits rising as he thumped the donkey and thought of a few days' sorely needed rest.

In an open space, and yet the trees growing close, they soon came on Nizells. It was a comfortable-looking timbered manor-house with a porch, whereof the first story, supported by corbels, somewhat overhung. In front, on a paved terrace, a lady and a child were strolling up and down in the warm morning sunshine. The lady was bareheaded, with the exception of a transparent black lawn veil (in which the soldier thought she almost seemed a negress), while in her hand she carried a feather fan. She walked languidly and yet with grace, thrusting forward her bare bosom much in the manner of a pigeon. The child wore a white cap, tied over his ears and under his chin, and a blue-linen jacket with a shining leather belt.

'Make thy reverence,' whispered Jane. 'Tis Mistress Price, Sir Randolph's daughter.'

'Is that the soldier?' the lady called, as they came up the path. 'Where are you going to put him, Jane?'

'In the attic, madam, and his ass in the wood-house. Come, friend,' she cried; and, with the donkey, led the way round towards the back.

But the soldier remained there at the edge of the pavement, with his hat in his hand, looking up at the lady, who had thrown back her veil, and sidelong down at the child. All round Mistress

Price's temples her hair clustered with many little tendril curls, and others longer at the sides, the rest gathered behind and fastened with a long black ribbon. Her large eyes were heavy and drowsy, and seemed dark and discontented. Careless and, indeed, slovenly as was her dress, Bird could see she was a rare beauty, and when well attired and by candle light would doubtless break many a courtier's heart. The child was very sturdy and healthy looking—tanned as a nut, and a little nose clustered with freckles.

There was a pause, till 'He is a nice man, I think,' the child whispered, by his mother's skirts. 'Will he let me ride his donkey?'

'Doubtless he will,' the lady smiled, showing her dimples and a row of lustrous teeth, 'and tell you all about his battles.'

Again there was silence, while Bird tried to think of something to say.

'Does the young master care for toys?' at last he ventured, with a scrape and a pull at his hair.

'Tell him to make me a gun,' whispered the child.

'Let the poor man have food first,' his mother chided. 'Come, Jimmy, the sun grows too hot here. We are better within.'

The soldier, finding himself alone, sighed, and then, after the manner of the godly, groaned. There was still time for him to go. If Jane had not taken the donkey with her, he thought he would have gone. But she came and called him at the angle of the house, and, like a scholar summoned to his book, he followed her round into the kitchen without a word.

§.

### III.

AMOS BIRD soon fell into Nizells' ways. Though no carpenter, he was handy enough, and what with mending the hen-coops, chopping wood for Jane Port's fire, and cutting fresh hedge-stakes and palings, had scarcely a moment to himself. In truth, it was the end of the day and the hours of rest he had least relish for; for then there was always Jane to sit with in the kitchen, her cackling talk to listen to, her love-making to ward off, and her wearisome, ingenious questions about his past to answer. So heartily tired did he grow of the many lies he told her—since, in fact, it was as a staunch Parliament man he had always fought, and fought well, and in Newbury had never been except once or twice as a lad to market—that out of sheer irritation he was often on the point of telling her the truth, and be damned to her. He

would perhaps have straightway done it, did he not have the instinct she never would peach on him, and that the confession would only have inevitably drawn them closer together, after all.

Wherever he might be at work, in garth or meadow, there, sure enough, was the little James. The child never seemed happy away from him, was always searching and asking for him at all hours of the day. And the soldier saw it was greatly to his mother's content, for the child's ceaseless activity was apt to tire and vex her; and though, after her fashion, she loved him dearly, doubtless she loved her ease more. So it fell out that whenever Jimmy was not with his grandfather he was with the soldier, and often enough they were all three together, as close as thieves.

Most of all the child loved the disorder at the back by the wood-house. There a load of gravel—fine, dry, red gravel—had been carted from the pit up the hill, and there thrown down for him to play with. If his mood were pacific he would call it Primrose Hill, and pretend to espy thence all the chief buildings and sights of London. The rabbit-hutch would be Whitehall, and the hen-coops Westminster, the tall foxglove the spire of Paul's, and the path that ran to the wood pile the easy flow of River Thames. 'And I can see the coaches crawling along the Strand,' he would say, 'and the soldiers at platoon in Hyde Park.' And lo! it would be nothing but shoals and trails of ants.

But more often his humour was warlike, and the gravel a fort. It was full of Moors—bloody, black-faced Moors—and must immediately be stormed. With a tin sword in his small brown fist, a scarf of his mother's tied officer-fashion over his shoulder, and his eyes blazing, he would yell: 'Charge, brave boys! Charge!' and, followed by the soldier, armed with a billhook, carry all before him. 'Die, knave, rogue, cuckold!' he would scream, stabbing the pulseless August air. 'Are they all dead, Amos?'

'Nay,' says the soldier; 'here's one of 'em left.' And James would start yelling again, and hack and stab at the gravel till his little tin sword bent.

When the weather was too hot—and daily it seemed to grow hotter—he was cautioned to keep out of the sun and sit quiet beside him while the soldier worked. Then his chief amusement was to gather the wood chips as they fell, and either stack them together as companies of soldiers or, if there seemed any shape in them, to recognise them as friends. 'See, Amos, here is the King,' he would say, 'and these are his cross-tempered little dogs that

yap so ; and this is the queen, because she is a brown, lowly woman, and they say her legs are bent.'

'Where heard you that, James ?' laughed Sir Randolph loudly.

'I heard it,' the child replied, nodding his head wisely. 'And this smooth piece is Mistress Stewart, who kisses me so, and whom I love.'

'And the duke, your gossip—where is he ?'

'Here is the duke, and that is his long, bony nose.'

'Fie !' cried Sir Randolph. 'Never let his royal highness hear that, or you will get never a ship to fight when you grow up.'

'I want no ships,' said Jimmy sturdily. 'I shall go into the Guards, and wear a scarf and gorget. The sea would only make me sick.'

'The duke is his gossip,' whispered Sir Randolph to Amos, 'and hath promised me to push his fortunes in the Navy. A good gossip that for a boy, friend—eh ?'

He winked, and, despite his white hairs, looked cunning and unreverend, the soldier thought.

So the long warm days passed, to Amos Bird's great content and peace, and further and further behind him died away as in a mist the recollection of the horrors he had fled from. He could scarcely believe there was such a thing as plague in all the world ; yet he had seen men and women drop dead of it in the streets, and heard their screams as they ran naked to ease their torments in the river.

Happy as he was all day, most he loved the evening cool, when young master would clamour for a donkey ride, and off they would go together down the lane towards the farm to watch the harvesting (which, despite the afflictions of the country, or to make up for them, was the most plenteous known for many years past), or up the hill and through the swing gate on to the common, to talk to the miller and listen to his complaints of the strangeness of the times when never a wind blew to work the mill. Home they came by moonlight—the big, yellow, harvest moon—chattering aloud in the cool country silence of many things—of their house in London, close to the Cockpit, and of the king at Salisbury, and the return of the Court to Whitehall when once the plague was stayed, and Jimmy would see his grand friends again.

'What is the plague, Amos ?' he once asked. 'My mother shudders at it and says it makes men hideous to look at, and my

grandfather declares it is all the fault of the poor, because they are so dirty and ill-fed. Is it worse than the toothache ?'

'It is worse, young master, in this—that a man does not easily recover therefrom.'

'I would rather have it than the toothache, though,' said Jimmy thoughtfully. 'I had the toothache once, and thought I should have died.'

## IV.

DINNER at Nizells, for master and man, was always midday, and by that time the sun was always off the front of the house. There, in a great chair drawn out on the pavement in the shade, most of the early afternoon the old cavalier would sit drinking his wine, and dozing later with a handkerchief thrown over his face; while within Mistress Price lay stretched on her bed, scarcely clothed (as the shocked Jane declared), reading plays.

Sometimes, as Amos passed on his way to resume work, Sir Randolph would summon him and give him a glass out of the black bottle. It was a sticky Portugal wine, brought into fashion by the queen, and to Bird's taste exceeding strong and unwholesome; and the soldier, who thought but ill of the restored monarch and his ways, had always to drink his health, and that of the duke, his brother, whom he both loathed and feared.

Often Sir Randolph would keep him there talking of the late wars and his late Most Sacred Majesty; invariably to end by abusing him heartily and freely. Indeed, the old cavalier was almost as bitter against Charles Stewart, his untruthfulness and ingratitude, as if he had been a plain Roundhead from the first.

'I sold my plate for him. You see for yourself, Bird, I have nought but pewter left to be served on,' he cried, aggrieved, 'and I drink even my ale out of a glass; yet I cannot recall he ever gave me a word of acknowledgment, much less thanks. I armed every hind I had about the place, who could stick on a horse. Even now I pension some of their widows. There are three of them at this hour in cottages of mine, plague take it, like to live for ever. And all he ever did was to give me a beggarly knighthood after Edgehill, and when I ventured to ask him touching the Irish Papists and their rumoured coming into England, told me lie after lie. Smiling, too, and pressing my hands, and looking me deep in the eyes, as if I were his dearest friend.'

'I think,' said the soldier, drawing himself up and shuffling on his feet, 'saving your honour's presence, his late Majesty was plainly a knave.'

'Between ourselves, friend,' replied Sir Randolph, 'he was a good deal of a knave. But they were wrong to cut off his head, Bird. I could never stomach that. It was both sacrilege and murder.'

'Ay,' said Bird, with a deep breath, 'that it was. But he died well.'

'He died like a gentleman,' said Sir Randolph coldly, fingering his chin tuft and nodding his head. 'There were many who did it for him; it was the least he could do for us.'

As for Rupert the nephew, for Prince Rupert the knight had nothing but whole-hearted bitter contempt. He was a swinish German, a beggarly Rhinelander, a cock-eyed necromancer, a dried and salted obstinate, hotheaded, ignorant——

And here, as the little James ran out of the house, flushed and smiling after his midday sleep, Sir Randolph checked himself and broke off.

'Mum's the word, Bird,' he whispered, laying his finger along his thin nose. 'Little pitchers have long ears, and I would not have the innocent repeat phrases of mine at Whitehall. We live by Court favour, as others do, and must swim with the tide.'

It was that same early September evening, when they were all out on the terrace, and, sword in hand and scarf on shoulder, Jimmy was drilling the soldier, putting him through the firelock exercise with a wooden gun—to his grandfather's great delight—that they caught the sound of pipes coming towards them through the wood, nearer and nearer. All day they had heard the wains go creaking along the road below and some of them up the hill, and now as they heard the pipes knew it must mean the music of harvest home.

'Surely the knaves would never come here with their mumming?' cried Sir Randolph pettishly. 'I am no farmer of theirs, and they will drink up all my spring brew.'

Through the wood they came, however, and out into the opening; a goodly company of rustics, men and women and children. First came the men with pipes and tabors, playing and dancing forward queerly with crooked knees, their eyes rolling, half in true ecstasy and half in honest fear of their reception. They had parti-coloured ribbons in their hats, and ribbons tied round ankle and calf as high as the knee. Among them was one

with a drum, beating it lustily as he marched in front of a huge fat fellow, all garnished and belted round with sheaves. He seemed to be already half drunk, and his round red face glowed through the ripe wheat-ears like a copper warming-pan in front of the fire. The rest were all in smock, brandishing small bundles of corn, of rye, and oats, and barley, while one tall, impudent, brown wench carried hers and dangled and danced it as though it were a baby. Solemnly and heavily they came dancing up the path, and ranged themselves in front of the terrace; with something of defiance, it seemed, as though asserting their right to come mumming where they would. Then they broke off and gave a feeble little cheer. In the silence that followed there could be heard the whispering and nudging of the children, the tittering of the women, and the heavy breathing through the nose of the fellow tied up in the sheaves. He it was who was at last thrust forward, and clearing the wheat-ears away from his hot face with one huge hand, while with the other planted on his stomach he made a bow, began to shout out his verse, jiggling up and down as he bawled :

Here be we with the last of the load,  
Down through the lane and up through the wood,  
Harvest be carried with all its wealth,

And we wish little master and missus, and you, Sir Knight Randolph, and gentlefolks all here present, good health. Hurray!

Whereupon pipe and tabor and drum started again, and the fellows with the ribbons crooked and kicked their legs like Bedlamites.

How it then happened neither the soldier nor Jane Port could ever tell, unless maybe the old knight was not quite sober (likely enough, seeing he had that afternoon drunk the whole of his bottle, unaided, and sent for another), but nothing would content him save to find fault with their dancing, to declare they had lost the true touch and mode of it, and that—by the rood!—he would show them himself.

He had seen, he said, making them a small speech, the Hollanders dance at Breda, and both Italians and French in Paris, besides some leaping Hungarians who had come to dance before his Majesty at The Hague——

‘God save the King,’ at that shouted the rustics, who knew Sir Randolph came from Court, and desired to conciliate.

‘Peace, you rogues!’ cried the knight, rising from his chair and giving it a push behind him. ‘Now then, knaves, play me a



tuneful stately measure on your pipes ; and you, sirrah, tap me the drum, but do not roll it till I stop.'

And dance he would, notwithstanding Mistress Price's expostulations, who seemed ashamed ; for which, seeing the old gentleman meant nothing but good nature, the soldier secretly condemned her.

Indeed, as he began, Sir Randolph's attitude was grave and dignified, entirely becoming to his quality ; but as he warmed to his work (the wine, too, one may suppose acting as a diluent to the aged blood in his veins), and recollection came to him of what he had seen foreigners accomplish in his travels, he began to curvet and to leap, to snap his fingers and to crow, and, with his arms crooked archwise over his head, to turn rapidly round and round, bending the knee and striking the pavement with his heel in true Egyptian fashion. Faster grew the music, more phrenetic the drum, and still the dauntless old gentleman, gathering delight in the exercise and encouraged by their cheers, and, in truth, stung, as it seemed, by some strange insect, twisted and leapt and crowed—faster, higher, louder. He ended with a mighty lofty bounce in the air, and down he came breathless and trembling, his legs wide apart, his old hams shaking, with wide-opened, frightened eyes seeking to steady himself, as helpless as an infant trying for the first time to walk. He would have fallen but for Bird, who ran and caught him by the outstretched hand, and supported him to his armchair. There he lay panting, with closed eyes, while still the music played and the drum rolled ; and the women and children gave a shrill cheer. As for Jimmy, he screamed and clapped his hands with all his might, though his mother made mouths at him, and soon went off sulkily into the house.

'How did I do it, Bird?' Sir Randolph gasped. 'Rarely, or no?'

'Worshipful sir,' said the soldier gravely, though within he was quivering with laughter, 'I have never seen such dancing. Since David condescended to dance before the Ark, there has been none such in my time.'

'Enough,' panted the old gentleman, well pleased with his success. 'Send them round to the back and see that Jane gives them a drop of beer. The fellows that piped and he that spake the speech may each of them have a glass, but no more, of my Oporto. And, Bird, if there be any cakes for the women and children, they may have them, too.'

When at last the company had gone, greatly comforted with

their entertainment, and dutifully amazed at Sir Randolph's condescension and agility—gratified, besides, with a handful of groats and testers from kindly prodigal Mistress Price, who had soon recovered her temper, and a few of her soiled ribbons for the women—the soldier returned to the terrace and found the knight still lay there extenuate, with the little James cuddling in his lap.

'Eh, chuck! eh, sweetheart boy,' he was saying, with still some remains of breathlessness; 'tis the last of my dancing, the very last. Thou wilt never see thy old grandfather dance more, till he dances into his grave.'

'Nay,' answered Jimmy, 'when we go back to London I will tell the King what I have seen, and he will make thee do it all over again down the long play-gallery at Whitehall.'

And all the evening till bedtime he was pressing his grandfather to show them another dance. 'Just one tiny one, snapping thy fingers like the gipsies.' And the old knight chuckled and swore that not for all the gold in the Indies would he ever dance again. He had not done such a thing for twenty years, and he would feel it in his bones all the few remaining days of his life.

So Jimmy was carried off to bed, fretful and complaining, and Sir Randolph lay there long in the dusk in his armchair, fingering his white chin tuft and watching the moonlight broaden in gentle splendour as it came over the hill. Then with a deep sigh, on his daughter's summons from the porch to supper, he rose and dragged himself painfully within.

## V.

ON his truckle-bed up in the attic Bird was lying in his shirt, dozing and starting, and longing for day. At last towards morning he fell into a deep sleep, and dreamt he was once more at the sail-maker's, forcing the needle through the stiff canvas, in the long low room—

Suddenly, at that instant, he found himself wide awake. Someone, he thought, some woman had screamed. In his sleep, as he had heard it, he had paused to fancy it the scream of a mother whose child had fallen into the river at Wapping Stairs, and was being carried out fast and wickedly by the tide.

But again she screamed, and then Bird knew it was in the house. He leapt off the bed and began to huddle on his clothes.

Belike there were robbers in Mistress Price's chamber, for it sounded as though thence it came.

In his stocking feet he rushed to the door, bent himself double as he ran along under the rafters, and climbed down the ladder. He shouted as he ran over the boards to the staircase to startle the rogues, as he hoped, and let them know help was near. At the foot of the stairs he could see down the corridor, and there, coming out of his daughter's chamber, he saw Sir Randolph. The old knight looked all white and frail in his nightdress, and was shaking and trembling violently, a most aged and piteous sight.

'Run, Bird,' he cried, 'run to the mill. There is a surgeon lodging there, newly come from London. Jimmy is taken with a dire sickness.'

The soldier almost fell; indeed, if he had not clutched at the hanging he must have dropped. Then, with a cry—a loud and bitter cry of terror—he turned and rushed out of the house.

Never heeding his bare feet, up the hill and through the swing gate he ran, and across the corner of the common towards the mill. It was bright sunshine, perhaps five o'clock, and since for a wonder there was a breeze, the mill was working. White-winged and sonorous, to the unhappy soldier it seemed with steady power to be grinding life and death.

The miller's cottage was hard by, and there at an open window sat an elderly man, wrapped in a bedgown, reading a great book and smoking tobacco in a long pipe.

'Sir,' cried the panting soldier, beating his breast to get his breath; 'come down, I pray you. There is sickness—terrible sickness—'

As he paused, half strangled, the grave gentleman looked down on him quietly and reprovingly, answering nothing, and just parting his moustaches with the stem of his pipe. Then, as he seemed about to resume his book, content with his tobacco and the warm sunshine in which he sat, 'He will not come,' thought the soldier, with a groan. 'He thinks it is only some carter taken with the colic; or, maybe, he is too great a man, even for us.'

'Sir,' he cried, coming closer under the window, 'it is the little heir of Nizells, the child of the great and worshipful courtier, Sir Randolph Cleeve. Sir, I beseech you—'

With a dignified gesture the surgeon raised his hand. 'Sir Randolph Cleeve?' he said. 'One moment, friend. I come.'

He rose, and through the open window Bird could see he was leisurely dressing himself.

'Sir,' he whimpered, raising his joined hands, 'by Jesus Christ His passion, I implore you haste or it may be too late—too late!' And there, till the great man should make himself ready, he waited, leaning up against the wall of the miller's house, his face hidden in the crook of his arm.

In a long cloak edged with fur, with a flat cap on his head, and carrying a gold-headed cane, the surgeon at last pompously emerged. Under his arm he held a box, and this he solemnly handed to the soldier, charging him weightily to be careful of it.

Across the common and down the hill they went together, the soldier chattering and limping, the surgeon asking him some few questions, and the soldier answering as best he could, hiding, meanwhile, the mighty horror gripping at his heart.

'The teeth, I give you my assurance,' said the surgeon indulgently, wisely nodding his head. 'The teeth and convulsions. Naught but the teeth.'

As he walked strutting with the cane he hummed a little tune, working his thick eyebrows and showing his sound white teeth; but whether it were from natural gaiety of disposition or in confidence of his own skill, the soldier could not tell. Only he knew he hated him for it.

At the porch he motioned Bird to precede him, and, gathering his cloak together, followed him up the stairs. He no longer hummed, but frowned and muttered with the abstraction of an augur.

In the chamber Mistress Price sat in an armchair, holding the child tight in her arms. She seemed to be all eyes as she looked up at Bird, and past him at the surgeon. Partly dressed, Sir Randolph came forward eagerly, with outstretched hands. 'My good sir!' he cried; and taking the surgeon by the elbows shook them heartily. 'Our little boy——' He broke off with a sob, and, throwing himself upon the amazed surgeon's breast, began to weep.

'Nay, Sir Randolph, good Sir Randolph, noble Sir Randolph Cleeve!' the surgeon cried, comforting and patting him. 'This may not be. Have confidence in my skill, I beseech you; and you, too, gracious lady, of whose virtues and beauty I have heard so much in commendation. Come, lay me the young gentleman

on the bed ; and you, sirrah, run to the kitchen and tell them to heat me some bricks.'

So while Bird ran to find Jane Port, who, knowing naught of the trouble, was pushing loaves in the oven with a long pole, the surgeon laid aside his cane, and, leisurely opening his box and putting on his spectacles, proceeded to examine the sick child.

Piteous, indeed, were the cries in the bedchamber when the surgeon at last confessed that here was a case where skill was useless, and that already the child was dead. The convulsion, he explained, arising from the teeth had spread and seized on the heart, presently crushing the life out, as the hot and cruel hand of a boy nips the life out of a linnet. With the gold-headed cane, standing well apart from the bed, he demonstrated to the stupefied mother and to Sir Randolph, feebly shaking and crying, that it could not be otherwise, as though they were dull students of his in a class ; and as he did it he smelled a pomander he had taken from his box, and quitting them as quickly as decently he could, without demand or expectation of a fee, went away down the stairs with his cloak drawn over the mouth, cursing himself for his folly in ever having come.

In the porch he met Bird coming running round from the kitchen with a hot brick in a napkin.

'Hey, fellow !' he cried, motioning him to keep his distance with the cane, and speaking muffled from behind his cloak. 'How it comes here I know not, unless it be in some merchandise ; but here is the very thing pursuing I have come from London to escape. Yonder young gentleman is dead, I doubt not, of the plague. Tell your master to set dishes of vinegar about the house, and burn sulphur, and God keep you all from a like infection. But summon me not again, for I will not come.'

And with his box under his arm, and no trace of former dignity, the surgeon hurried away with covered mouth and bent head.

## VI.

It was midday before Bird ventured again towards the house. Ever since the surgeon had left him, standing there shaking in the porch, his heart dissolved to water, he had been wandering through the wood, groaning and trampling the brushwood like a wounded beast. But, alas ! he could not weep, and therein, in the torture it caused him, he fancied part of his punishment lay.

On the paved terrace in front Mistress Price was aimlessly walking up and down, still only half dressed, twisting her hands, and feebly waving her head from side to side as she moaned. 'Here is heavy sorrow come upon us, Bird,' she cried bitterly, as he came up the path. 'What have we ever done to deserve so cruel a blow?'

In the porch, just where he had dropped it, still lay the brick, cold now as a stone, and with head bent Bird passed into the desolate house. Outside the chamber door above he paused, and then, with a groan that tore him like a wound, he entered.

Jimmy lay on the bed in his nightdress, straight on his back. With his little half-opened mouth he seemed to seek pitifully—nay, almost to entreat—for explanation of the calamity so suddenly befallen him. Bird noticed how brown the small hand was, and how white the slender arm above the wrist where the linen jacket had used to fasten. He touched him on the forehead, and almost screamed at the startling coldness of it. Then at length with an effort he opened the nightdress at the throat, and turning it back bent forward to look for the dreaded tokens. After all, the surgeon might be mistaken. These men who fled from London were very apt to see in any chance sickness the disease they feared. That it had only been some ordinary complaint of childhood—perhaps a colic from unripe fruit—was the only comfort which had sometimes come to him when wandering all the morning in the wood. As with his own eyes he recognised what he now knew must be his own immediate handiwork, with a wild cry he fell senseless backwards on the floor.

When he came to himself he found Sir Randolph standing beside him, haggard and dry. 'Thou art a good fellow, Bird,' he cried, as the dazed soldier raised himself upon his elbow. 'Thou feelest our grief as if it were thine own. Thou art right; our little James loved thee well. Go,' he said, after a pause, 'make me a coffin for the boy—a little coffin for our darling boy.' And his white chin tuft shook as if with the cold.

Bird rose, and for the first and last time kissed his playmate on the parched lips. Then, putting his mouth to the dead child's ear, he whispered: 'Forgive me, and as thou, being in heaven, forgivest, entreat the good God to let me weep. Grant me this favour, for Jesus Christ His sake. Amen. Do not forget, and I will not forget either.'

All the afternoon in the woodhouse he worked dumbly at his task, using what poor skill he had, and yet failing miserably; trying to weep, and failing, too, in that. Neither food nor drink would he touch, nor do more than shake his head wrathfully at Jane when she besought him to take something of what she brought. The woman was shocked, too, at the sorrow befallen her master's house; yet more, it seemed, at the effect of it on Bird, at the dour silence it drave him to, the scant heed he paid her, the cold distance it fetched between them. When at last towards evening the work was clumsily finished, and with bowed head Bird was moving away, Jane stood watching him from the kitchen door, muttering broken and angry phrases. But what they might be, wherein lay her complaint, Bird neither knew nor cared.

For his mind was full of what he must do, of the full confession to be made, ere the mercy of tears could bring relief to his tortured imprisoned soul. Long time in the gathering dusk he stumbled through the shrouded recesses of the wood, searching for words, praying for guidance, seeking some measure of accommodation with an outraged God. For that, in his proper passion, the old knight would kill him he never doubted; and so it was to a just death he believed himself faring—as surely as to Tyburn—when at last, at nightfall, he turned again out of the wood towards Nizells. Almost he felt joyful at the thought of the relief it must bring him. That there were no tears in heaven he felt assured; but in the lurking shadows of the hell where he was plunging, he dared to hope they might be suffered unobserved.

Meantime, the windy sky was clouded. Rarely the moon broke through in full splendour; more often it lay in quickly shifting patches, swinging like giant lantern light across the timbered front of the manor house. In his familiar chair outside on the terrace Bird could see the old Cavalier was sitting, a dark and mournful patch on the grey pavement. As he came up the path towards him, trembling with resolution, the wood-owls screeched like women in travail.

Bird stood there before him, with his hands out, as he had seen the penitent fanatics stand at the drumhead in Cromwell's army, confessing their sins before going into battle. His mind was so full, his heart beating so, despite his desperate and despairing courage, that it was some moments before he could speak. And, as a judge, with dropped head and hands outstretched on the arms of his chair, the old knight waited in silence for him to begin; or,



perhaps, after so cruel a day, it might be the poor old gentleman dozed.

'Sir Randolph,' at last he cried, 'hearken to me, I pray. Deal with me in justice as a sinner. I have lied to thee, Sir Randolph, from the first; I have been thine enemy always—all my life, for never was I in the King's army, never on thy side, but ever fought against him and thee. Nay, more, I was there present when he died, and in his passion I mocked him. I spat upon him as he passed to judgment, and as he knelt upon the scaffold I jeered.'

Again the swift moonlight swung across the terrace, and as it passed Bird saw the old knight sadly drop his head lower in grief on his breast.

'Black as is my soul with lying,' again he cried, 'it is blacker still with ingratitude. Now have I to confess the bitterest wrong one man may do another. I have returned incomparable goodness with evil; I have violated the kindest, the noblest hospitality; I have carried infection into a pure and honourable household. 'Tis I, Sir Randolph, who have brought hither the plague from London; 'tis I who have wilfully slain thy darling boy. Kill me, therefore, good Sir Randolph, I implore thee. Let me purge my miserable soul, and so stand naked before God to receive His final, awful judgment.'

He paused, and stood there with his hands out to receive the thrust. 'Nay,' he cried, on the knight's continued grievous silence, 'if thou hast no death for me, my deaths will be a thousand; if thou hast naught for me but silence and abhorrence, my torture will be greater than I can bear. Kill me only once, Sir Randolph, for pity's sake—good Sir Randolph!' —

He fell upon his knees and grovelled towards him in his agony. Seizing the chair by the arms, he shook them passionately, crying aloud for judgment and death. And as the old knight slid slowly towards him and fell into his arms, there came a rift in the troubled zenith, and in the pure white moonlight he saw on the dead man's face the dreadful purple tokens he had seen but lately on the child within.

Then, indeed, did terror seize him—abject, panic terror, terror of the horrible disease, and terror of the yet more weighty judgment in store, and like a madman he fled away into the night, screaming of God's wrath and the tormenting fires of hell.

In the kitchen Jane heard the forlorn cries, and, pressing her hands on her thin unlovely bosom, fell into unwonted prayer.

'God keep us!' she cried, as she tottered to the door. 'That cannot be the owls.'

## VII.

How she found him, how she ever guessed whither he had fled, or at the trouble that drove him, no man can tell; unless, perchance, it may be that, even in the old and barren of spirit, love keeps his instinct and prescience. It was not, however, till towards the close of the following day that at last she came on him sitting by the roadside in the rain; for, by now, the weather was completely broken. He looked up at her savagely from under his wet matted hair, and bade her not come nigh him; and as she still pressed on, leapt to his feet and threatened her with stones.

'Nay, Amos,' she cried, 'dear Amos, let me come with thee; let me be near thee in thy trouble. I have always loved thee, ever since a lad. Let me be with thee now, for a time—only for a time.' Despairingly, she cried out to him she had always known from the first whence he had come, that she had never flinched from him at Nizells, and never would. What was the plague to her, if only she might be with him?

All the wet evening, driving the laden donkey before her, she continued to follow him, as near as she dared go; for plainly the man was distraught, and never spared pelting her with stones. And she cried out to him what she believed might lessen the anguish of his remorse, what she hoped might even bring his sorrow some assuagement: that Mistress Price, at the best, was naught but a loose woman; that little James was only a bastard—hers and the duke's; and old Sir Randolph nothing better than a time-server, a miser, and a thief. She stood there, white and defiant, out on the gleaming wet road, while the mad soldier cast stones at her and cursed her, and bade her be silent, or he would come and cut her throat.

Late that night they were seen together at an alehouse in Newbury, the soldier sitting crying over a mug of ale, the woman still trying to comfort him.

'The poor man,' she explained to the alehouse keeper, 'hath heard of the loss of all his family in the city from the plague, and

will not be consoled. He could not be with them owing to service with a noble knight at Bucklebury, and now he believes it his own proper fault, and grieves sore.'

The landlord clicked sympathetically with his tongue, and nodded.

'It grows late, mistress,' he said. 'Will you and the poor gentleman be needing beds?'

'Nay,' answered Jane, with a wan blush, 'I go to my sister's in Bank Street, who will give me room for the night, I doubt not. See, good master,' she added, drawing the landlord aside and unknotting her handkerchief, 'here is money for bed and breakfast. Let him want for nothing; nor the ass either. And, landlord,' she said, with tears in her eyes, 'prithee, dry his clothes for him and grease his boots well, for the poor soul's feet are cut and bleeding; and make him eat heartily in the morning, and keep him by the fire till I am round again. Take good care of him, landlord, for Christ's sake, and thou shalt be well paid.'

Wondering at her earnestness, the landlord nodded and opened the street door for her.

'It rains,' he said briefly, peering out into the drenched pall of midnight.

'Ay,' said Jane, throwing her damp skirt over her head, 'it rains, indeed. Pray heaven it may clear the air.'

The landlord closed and bolted the door, and going to the fire raked out the ashes.

When at last he came to summon the soldier to his chamber he found him fast asleep, with his arms outstretched, the palms uppermost, and his head on the table. Even in the hollow of his dreams he seemed still to be imploring the stroke of pardon.

WALTER FRITH.

*BARBADOS THE LOYAL.*

BY FRANK T. BULLEN.

BEYOND and above the delight I feel at standing once more on deck at the breaking of the day, and watching the well-remembered outlines of little Barbados gradually growing distinct in the pearly light, is the recollection of the really great part played by the island in the fortunes of the West Indies. Loyal with a blind, unreasoning loyalty, speaking of themselves as more English than the English, the 'Badians, whether white or black, are perhaps more intensely patriotic than any people under the sun. Why this should be so I do not pretend to speculate. I can only note the existence of a strange fact, one that must be reckoned with in all our dealings with the West Indies. A few moments' thought about the matter breeds great wonder why it should be so. For it will be remembered that in the bad old days of our history even those who fought and died for the freedom we now enjoy were not averse, when opportunity offered, from sending their own white country men and women, whom the fortune, or accident, of war had delivered into their hands, out here as slaves—yes, slaves—to toil under this blazing tropical sun and live upon such coarse and miserable food as the avarice of those who purchased them would allow. One would naturally expect to find in the descendants of people thus used a fierce, deep-seated hatred of the land that could thus serve her children, or, at the best, some such feeling as that possessed by American citizens of British and Dutch descent towards England to-day. I mean the feeling that prompts them to teach in their schools the daily lesson of hatred and contempt for England, and to dwell with never-fading delight upon the fact that they 'whipped us,' as they put it.

But in spite of the past, and of the long neglect which, after our bungling fashion, we have accorded to our most loyal colonies, the Barbadians love the Old Country with a deep-seated affection which nothing seems able to weaken in the least degree. And this it is, more than anything else, which makes the little island so very interesting to a thoughtful Briton. I must hasten to say, however, that this by no means exhausts its attractions; rather it

only accentuates them. Owing to its position in what may justly be called the heart of the north-east trade winds, and the configuration of the land, it is the healthiest place of any note possessed by us within the tropics. I am quite well aware that you will see upon the old tombstones in the cathedral grounds, dating back over two hundred years, many allusions to the 'deadly climate,' but one must steadily bear in mind the way in which people lived in those days, and transfer the blame to them from the climate.

While enjoying most keenly the view as daylight strengthened, I was greatly amused, but withal somewhat saddened, to notice how persistently a large class of travellers will worry themselves into a perfect fever without the slightest cause before and upon arriving at their destination. You meet them everywhere; on train journeys, coming to Euston, say, they will be fussing and fidgeting about before arriving at Willesden, and will stand, their hands full of parcels or bags, ready to leap upon the platform before the train stops, and work themselves almost into a fit of madness over supposed losses of luggage. That they are usually far later in getting away from the station than the deliberate passenger, who does not stir until the train stops, never seems to occur to them, any more than does the obvious fact that the saving of five minutes, if possible, would be dearly bought by the waste of tissue necessary for such feverish restlessness. In like manner, you shall see upon the arrival of one of our cross-Channel steamers an almost frantic rushing and crushing to get ashore, in spite of the contemptuous warning of the officials and the repeated assurance that there is really no hurry--the train will not leave until all passengers have disembarked.

So in like manner and equal foolishness is it here. Instead of remembering that he is abroad for pleasure, and that hurry and worry are the two sworn foes of anything like enjoyment, behold the tourist, at least an hour before there is the slightest necessity for preparation, standing fully panoplied and loaded with light articles, feverishly tapping the deck with one foot and mopping his streaming brow at intervals, as if the ship were about to dash into the harbour at sixty miles an hour and, hardly giving him time to get into a boat, turn round and speed back to sea again. I do verily believe that such folly as this does more to spoil a holiday than anything else, and is, moreover, in tropical countries distinctly dangerous. The officials on board ship to-day are, with but few exceptions, far too careful of the interests of those they are

paid to look after to leave any loophole for delay and discomfort. Therefore please, dear fellow-tourists, don't hurry and don't worry. Having superintended the packing of your impedimenta, if you are leaving the ship here, and are dressed for going ashore, stand and enjoy the busy scene, snuff up the strange new scent of this sunny island, and watch the ebullient negro eager to do you some service for reward in current coin.

As the *Tagus* steamed slowly up to her buoy and was made fast, I noted with some surprise that there were three huge sailing-ships in harbour, deep-laden, and, sailor-like, I fell a-wondering what they could be doing here. Because it was absurd to suppose that they had shipped that immense mass of cargo here, or that they had brought it for discharge, under the present conditions of trade. But it was not until I met the genial superintendent of the Royal Mail Company that the mystery was explained, and another instance afforded of the wonderful ramifications of world trade. They were sugar ships from Java, which in the unsettled condition of the sugar market had been ordered here as a good centre, from which they might sail with all despatch to the most profitable market upon receipt of telegraphic advices; to the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, or the continent of Europe. Also there was a survival of a bygone day, an old clumsy-looking barque from New Bedford on a sperm-whaling expedition, whose appearance carried me back in spirit over most of the seas of the round world. The ubiquitous German steamer was there too, and also an Italian steamship groping for cargo. But what pleased me best was the appearance of the yacht-like inter-island steamers of this company, so gracefully elegant in their lines that it was hard to credit them with two thousand and odd tons capacity.

Comes to add to the bewilderment and unrest of the passengers before-named a flotilla of boats, each with its sable occupants screaming for patronage in choice negrese (if I may coin a word to express the quaintness of the negro dialect), and ready apparently to divide the prospective passenger piecemeal in order to get a share of his custom. Come also the dorys of the diving-boys, who to the untraveller beholder are really great fun, causing one to forget that water really can drown by the way they behave in its instability. But presently the tourist, even the first-time tourist, is made aware that beneath this chaos the forces of order have been at work; men he has never seen, humble servants of his that he will not be called upon to recognise financially or other-

wise, have been labouring on his behalf, and he has only to get into a boat and be rowed ashore to find that, except for the inevitable wonder at the strangeness of all surrounding scenes, his ways are ways of pleasantness and all his paths are peace. Comparatively so, of course.

The tourist in quest of strange scenes, of utter change, whose purse does not permit such a costly journey as that to the Far East, may find, will find, in these, our West Indian possessions, sufficient of marvel, of mystery, and of utter difference from anything to which he has hitherto been accustomed to compensate him for not being able to go farther afield. Thirty years ago, when I first landed at the carenage ('canash') of Barbados I was utterly bewildered by the amount of animation exhibited by the people, by the strangeness of everything around me, and by the all-embracing heat. The latter, indeed, as compared with what is felt on board the ship, is at first rather alarming to the novice in the tropics. But there is really no reason for alarm, as I soon found, or even discomfort, if only the commonest precautions suggested by prudence be observed. I have seen on this cruise a young man go ashore in Barbados in an ordinary suit of dittoes and a cloth cap. When I met him he was almost in a state of collapse through the heat, and actually wondered why. One would have thought that his personal sensations would have been sufficient to warn him from so foolish a course. To the ordinary person, however, who has summer clothes the weather presents no terrors, and by taking things quietly little or no inconvenience is felt.

To the student of history, above all, Barbados should be intensely interesting. Driving along its beautiful roads and enjoying the splendour of the vegetation, especially the gorgeousness of the flowers, one cannot help but think of the white slaves to whom I alluded in the outset of this article; must recall with feelings of utter horror the cruelty that doomed men and women of our own race to be sold like beasts and used worse than beasts in this tropical clime. One is continually bound to wonder whether even under the lash the negro and white slaves worked as do the freemen of to-day. I have just met an antiquated-looking truck, laden with a hogshead of sugar, the net weight of which is always about a ton. This truck, heavy and cumbrous enough in itself to be a fairly awkward drag in roughly paved streets like these, is, with its immense burden, being dragged along by two negroes, a third manipulating a pair of shafts for steering in the rear. I am rather



at a loss how to characterise their labour, for fear of being accused of exaggeration, but, really, under a northern sky I should call it terrific, to myself. In conveying cargo off to the ships also a most clumsy but immensely strong lighter, capable of taking some twenty tons, is used. Now, during the most of the year the north-east trade winds blow into Carlisle Bay with almost the force of a gale throughout the day, yet these huge boats are *rowed* off by four or five men working twenty-foot scaffold poles flattened at the ends. To row a mile like that against a heavy wind and sea is a task that seems impossible of performance, yet it is daily done and nobody is surprised. But to see the muscular effort put forth by these negroes from the time they leave the carenage, or river, until they arrive at the ship should inspire a wholesome respect, not merely for their strength, but for their powers of endurance and obvious willingness to put those powers to the proof. There is certainly nothing of the 'lazy nigger' about them.

In fact, I discover in this extreme capacity for the hardest work and cheapness of labour a most patent reason for the backwardness of some West Indian islands, notably Barbados, in the struggle for existence. Ancient, cumbrous, and lengthy methods are still used for the two reasons given in the beginning of this paragraph. There is also a third, which, whether advanced by prudential or philanthropic motives, is equally praiseworthy. It is that work, and consequently food, must be found for the teeming population, and if a sudden influx of capital were to result in the displacement of the human labour by the introduction of machinery, some very serious social complications would be certain to ensue. Things would adjust themselves in time, no doubt, but during that time there is equally no doubt that distress and disturbance would assume alarming proportions.

I know of no place in the world, certainly not even in the Southern States of America, where the curious spectacle of white and black people, equally native to the soil, equally acclimatised, and in perfect accord with each other, may be seen as here. In the absence of any direct statistics I must assume that many of the whites are descendants of English slaves sent over here under the infamous old system in vogue two hundred years ago. Some must, of course, be descendants of planters who have come down, in a double sense, to the social status of the field negro. But by some peculiar latent pride of race these poor whites, at least a very large number of them, have absolutely refused to miscegenate.

One look at them is sufficient to show that no African blood has ever mingled with theirs, and though burnt a lively red by exposure to the sun, their hair, features, and eyes are perfectly and entirely British; while those of the women who have been able to shade themselves a little would but for the curious 'Badian dialect pass muster in any English town as English. This, too, is in face of the fact that in many negro families of five or six children, with an absolutely black mother and pseudo-father, there will be as many shades of colour as there are children.

Bearing the fact in mind that Barbados was practically the last discovered of all the West Indian Islands, or Caribbean Islands, as I should prefer to call them rather than help to perpetuate the old misconception, there is, or should be, something fascinating in the consideration of its progress and in the contemplation of its cultivation. The tourist who arrives here will certainly, if he be wise, expend little precious time during the day in roaming the crowded, hot, and dusty streets of Bridgetown, but either by light railway or carriage get out into the country, where he will find much to interest, amuse, and instruct him, and, what is also of great consequence, excellent accommodation in a few comfortable hotels. Of course, for the tourist who expects to be 'Cooked' (no pun intended) disappointment is waiting, and such persons will usually be found lounging in long chairs on the front verandah of the nearest hotel, looking inexpressibly bored and apparently wondering why they came. Yet even they are unconsciously receiving much benefit from the warm air and strong life-giving breezes of this most healthful little island, the outpost of all the Caribbees, and from its geographical position the most perfectly aerated of them. Those who intend to obtain all the mental and physical good that such a wonderful trip as this can do them will never be at a loss for objects of interest and pleasure, for even driving along the roads one can study the domestic life of the people—can note how, with a little cabin the size of an omnibus, propped up on a few blocks of coral from the damp of the ground, the proprietor manages to run quite an estate, having a patch of garden ground, a pig or two, some goats, fowls and ducks, and even sometimes soaring to the possession of a calf and a well-groomed little donkey.

Into the much-vexed arena of politics I do not propose to enter. It does not commend itself to me as a profitable study in such a sketch as I intend this to be. But I should be entirely

false to my own convictions if I failed to point out how much evil has been done to Barbados in the past by the neglect and utter ignorance of successive home Governments, and, in spite of all the hard things that have been said about her planters and so forth, she has managed to hold her own against the utterly unscrupulous attempts, of Germany especially, to destroy her trade. But America also intends her no good unless she will transfer her affections to the United States, which is unlikely, and if effected would be of doubtful benefit to her. Also, I must say that I feel grieved to see how deeply the splendid services of the Royal Mail Company in the past have been ignored, and pariah steamers of foreign origin, of perfectly loathsome condition, and run at about one-tenth of the expense per ton of this company, are allowed to come in and carry off the cargo from under the very bows of the mail ships. The competition is so entirely one-sided. These mail ships are well-kept, well-manned, and well-officered. In the inter-island vessel in which I am at present writing, of 1,300 tons register, there are a captain and four officers, a chief engineer and four juniors, a doctor, a purser, a chief steward, and at least fifty hands. And there is not one too many for the work to be done, for on the inter-island passage northward from Barbados neither captain nor officers can reckon on a full watch's sleep, so rapid and arduous is the service, while its punctuality is to be implicitly relied upon. To think that this splendid service is often run without profit or gratitude makes me feel very sad.

But let us return to our consideration of Barbados itself. The first thing, I think, that strikes an observant visitor is the curious variety of negro dialects. They are enough to drive a precisian in language imbecile. For, not content with inflexions and intonations copious enough to turn a Chinese green with envy, every rule of grammar is systematically inverted, and the quaint *mélange* of speech is delivered at hurricane speed, making this pseudo-English quite as unintelligible as Sanscrit. I earnestly trust that no one will ever attempt to write a book in any current West Indian dialect of English. It would, I feel sure, be absolutely unreadable; besides, the accents and tone-values are impossible of reproduction in print. Without attempting to perform the impossible I should like to quote just one sentence I caught from our carriage one day: 'How you doan go down dese road an fotch dem watter like you ben beg for long pass.' In fairness to the negroes it must be said that when speaking to 'fresh people,' as they term the

English visitors, they modify this terrible jargon greatly, so that it does become possible to understand them by listening very carefully; while the better class of coloured folks speak quite a pure English, albeit with a strange singing accent.

There were many points of interest in this beautiful island that claimed attention. First of all a visit to Codrington College, that wonderful monument reared by old Sir Christopher Codrington, which has supplied so many earnest and godly ministers to the West Indies. The journey thither from Bridgetown is made by carriage, and is about fifteen miles as near as I can remember—rather a long distance for two horses if, as usual, the return journey is to be made shortly after arrival. So, as the merciful man is merciful to his beast, I should advise a trip to the Crane Hotel and the engaging there of another carriage from the courteous landlord. Indeed, the point of Barbados upon which the Crane Hotel is built is well worth a visit of itself, and if the visitor is vigorous he may enjoy a bathe in the roaring surf from the hotel bath-house that will long linger in his memory. And he will find his creature comforts very well attended to into the bargain.

From thence to the College is a beautiful drive of about six miles. The approach to the fine old building is through a magnificent avenue of those amazingly artificial-looking trees, the palmiste palms. I have repeatedly been assured that they have no commercial value; but I do not believe that there is another tree in the whole vegetable kingdom that can so simulate an artificial production as does this one. A beautiful curved column of rough, or rather of *roughened* wood, since the corrugations are not extensive, and at a little distance are hardly discernible, springs from the ground almost like the bulb of a hyacinth in a vase. According to the age of the tree this rough column rises a number of feet into the air, and suddenly terminates in a shaft of smooth, pure green. This shaft, looking like polished jade, rises from four to ten feet farther, and terminates in a plume of feathery leaves whose midribs are sometimes twenty feet long, while the side-spreading greenery is from six inches to thirty-six. But at the time of budding there appears at the junction of the rough bark and the green column a series of green clubs, which contain the flowers. These clubs project upwards all around the trunk, and when they are ripe burst and exhibit the inflorescence—I cannot say the flower, since there is no blossom, only something like an exaggerated gross seed-spathe. These palms in the approach to Codrington

College rise to a uniform height of, I should say, 75 feet, and look as regular as the columns in a cathedral. On either side of their straight lines there are beautiful lawns of emerald-green, bordered with shrubs that simply blaze with colour. These lawns run down to limpid lakes which reflect all the glories of the tropical vegetation around, for, owing to their sheltered position, they are perfect mirrors.

Then the grey old building, up which beautiful plants climb, lies before the visitor, embowered in loveliness and basking in peace. Here, if anywhere, the devoted student may study God in nature and nature as God's expression. On the other, farther side, well-kept lawns and shrubberies slope down to the azure sea, and on the right a low building covers in a swimming-bath of almost icy-cold water, direct from the spring, which emerges into the light there for the first time. In this splendid restorative the humid students disport themselves after their studies or their games. I inquired of my guide whether it was not dangerous to pass so rapidly with a superheated body into so cold a medium, and he answered, with a rather disdainful shrug, that he had never known of any ill effects resulting from such a practice. Well, he must know, but I confess that I should have expected something different. But I remembered the sudden transitions of the Turkish bath and was silent.

Then we sauntered around the building to where we had left our carriage, and, behold! a monkey, a black furry creature, strongly reminding me of the grass monkeys we used to buy in Java. Knowing something of the quite uncertain ways of these animals, I did not cultivate a close acquaintance with him, contenting myself by standing well beyond his reach—he being chained—and making him a few offerings of fruit and biscuits. And then my courteous guide and I said farewell to each other. I held out my hand and shook the gentleman's warmly, but as I did so that monkey sprang out at me, and I make no doubt that if he could have broken his chain he would have given me an exceedingly bad few minutes. Wonderingly I asked my guide what I could have done to put the animal in such a passion with me; when he told me, to my great surprise, that it was pure affection on Jacko's part for him. He had owned the animal for fifteen years, and it was so passionately attached to him as to be intensely jealous of anyone else who even spoke to him; but if anyone so much as touched his master, as I had done unwittingly, he was always nearly frantic with rage. And, indeed, he looked to me as if he would take a long time to recover his equanimity.

Bidding farewell to the beautiful spot, with its old-world air of innermost peace, we drove back to the Crane, and after one of the pleasantest afternoons I have ever spent returned to the Marine Hotel in the balmy cool of the evening, along the pretty country roads, where the care-free families of small proprietors were sitting at their hut-doors in perfect contentment, indulging in the usual aimless chatter of the country communities, or sauntered along the roads, leading their goats to graze on the scanty herbage fringing the cane fields. I presume there is some bye-law forbidding them to allow their goats to range whithersoever they will, since the omnivorous habits of these quaint animals are well known, and they would doubtless play havoc with the growing crops. But I never grew tired of noting the patience of the negroes as they lounged by the roadside, restraining their goats by a piece of string from going farther than the edge of the cultivated land in their search for sustenance.

Next morning, by the advice of my guide, philosopher, and friend, Captain Owen, the Royal Mail Company's superintendent, I started at 7.30 A.M. on the toy railway that bisects the island for a visit to the watering-place, we should call it, of Bathsheba. I understood that it would be proper to spend the day there, and that I should find the accommodation good. So I went fully prepared to see and be seen; for the tourists to this pretty place may at least be sure that whatever else they may fail in, they will certainly afford considerable gratification to the indigenous population, if only in the contemplation of strangers. The latter part of the road lay along the sea coast of the island opposite to Bridgetown, and reminded me very strongly of the journey along the Isle of Man by the electric railway. Also it raised a grave question in my mind. I had been repeatedly assured by most competent authorities that Barbados, alone among the West Indian isles, showed no traces of volcanic agency. And Sir Daniel Morris, the courteous Minister of Agriculture for all the West Indies, had strongly impressed the same view upon me. Yet in view of all those enormous rock masses which lay piled in heaps all along the beach, what was I to think? I have seen lava in all its forms all over the world, notably in the South Pacific, and have grown to believe that I cannot mistake its honeycombed surfaces wherever I see them. And if those masses of rock off the coast of Barbados were not lava (*pace* all the authorities), then I have never seen any lava at all.



But I am still premature, for while travelling, even at the leisurely rate of the aforesaid toy railway, it was impossible for me to examine the rocks carefully. However, as soon as I had reached the pretty village of Bathsheba, and made my arrangements at the comfortable little hotel, I sauntered down to the beach, the tide being well out, and scrutinised the nearest masses of rock very closely. And I found, as I expected, that they *were* huge lava fragments, not torn from any cliffs on shore, for there were none that they could have been detached from, but hurled up from the sea-bed, ejected by some submarine volcano, who knows how long ago? That they had been under water for a very long time was obvious from the many coralline formations with which they were studded; but as to their general structure, they were identical with the water-worn lava masses in the South Seas, over which I had so often trudged with bleeding feet in my old whaling days. And if the whole of the Royal Geological Society were to declare I was wrong, I am still obstinate enough to hold to my own conviction. But I admit most freely that, as far as I have seen, there are no evidences of Plutonic agency *in* the island proper.

That was a pleasant, restful day at Bathsheba, mostly spent in prowling about the beach. Bathing was out of the question, for me at any rate, as the negro young folks trooped down to watch what the 'buckra' was doing, and to beg of him. I am sorry to say a single word not in praise of Barbados, but it is a fact, as far as my observation goes, that it holds the palm for beggars among all our islands in the West Indies. Men, women, and children beg without any reason if they perceive a likely subject; do it apparently as a matter of routine, and not at all because they have any need of alms. For the actual signs of want are strikingly absent, much to the credit of all concerned, since incomes must, in the nature of things, be exceedingly small. But I noticed, much to my satisfaction, that the pure white natives did not beg. Two or three of the dear little white children, bless their absolutely colourless little faces! did come and offer shells for sale; but they were as well-behaved as it was possible for children to be, and not at all importunate.

I left Bathsheba after a most delightful time, and arrived in Bridgetown feeling that I should be ready for any amount of sight-seeing on the morrow. And it was just as well that I did, for I found that my indefatigable friend had arranged for me to visit two sugar plantations the next day, as I had expressed a wish to



do so. The fact is that on my last visit to the island (before this cruise), thirty years ago, I had trudged out to a plantation and been very well received, in spite of the obvious fact that I was a youngster, of no importance whatever. And I was anxious to see what, if any, had been the alterations, as far as my memory would serve, in the surroundings and methods obtaining to-day compared with thirty years ago. Early next morning, therefore, I took a carriage and drove out to the first of the two plantations to which I had introductions. Arriving there, I was simply astounded to find that every detail, from the cutting down of the 'kee-an' (local pronunciation of 'cane'), was as familiar to me as if I had been there all my life. There was not, so far as I could see, the slightest alteration in anything. The furnaces burning 'trash' (the fibre of the cane after it has passed through the rollers of the mill and the juice has been squeezed out of it); the long row of boiling-pans on one side of the sugar-house, from the first introduction of the pure cane juice, to be mixed with lime, to the last pan, where the thickened juice had become sugar, and was being baled out into the troughs where the granulating frames were being slowly revolved in it by hand; the large shallow, wooden receptacles where the product was slowly cooling and draining, and the big warehouse full of hogsheads of sugar, still draining—all was as it had been thirty years before. The superintendent was an aged man, who had been thus engaged all his working life, and seemed even now to lack no energy, although he was close upon eighty. With great courtesy he showed all that was to be seen, but did not appear at all astonished when I commented upon the absence of all change. He attributed it to the perfection of the method principally, but also in some measure to the necessity for employing as much labour as possible, the island being over-populated, in his opinion.

I noted the absence of a distillery here, remembering, as I did very vividly, that feature of the estate and mill that I had been over many years before. My informant said that there never had been one; they had always sold their molasses and refuse from which rum was distilled, and did so now. Then he invited me to his pretty but lonely house. He had reared a large family, every member of which had prospered, married, and left him, and now in his very old age he was entirely alone, which I thought sad. I did not spend long in his house, nor did he press me to stay or offer me refreshment of any kind. Not that I needed anything,

but, remembering the boisterous Barbadian hospitality of olden days, I was somewhat surprised.

Then I drove off to another plantation, but as it was almost a facsimile of the one I had just left I did not go over it. Moreover, the agent or superintendent, who had some grown-up daughters to keep him company, seemed to me like a man distraught with some great loss, and I felt as if I was intruding at an inopportune time, and hastened away, satisfied that whatever changes there may have been in Barbados since my early days, there had been none in the sugar industry, and, remembering the state of the sugar trade, I was more than ever convinced of the necessity for the planters to turn their attention to the culture of cotton, both for economic and Imperial reasons.

Upon returning to the hotel I was informed that the mail steamer was in, and I consequently made my preparations for departure, knowing that my ship would be sailing that afternoon. Upon getting down to Bridgetown I was almost deafened by the bustle, and as there was a strong breeze blowing, and the heat was very great, the dust was almost blinding. Everybody in the street seemed full of important business, and I felt that it was no place for a loafer like me, so I fled to my ship. The canash was almost packed with craft being driven from shore to ship and from ship to shore through the rough water, and the many watermen's boats with passengers in transit. I had thought of visiting the mail ship, but a glance at the condition of things on board and around her decided me to do nothing to add to the cares of her officers, who I felt sure were in no case to be pestered by inquisitive strangers like myself with no excuse whatever for their intrusion. So I decided to go on board the *Eden* and make myself at home, pending our departure for the north.

### THE DESERTED VILLAGE.

SOME years ago the 'Morning Post' coined the expression 'The Rural Exodus,' and it served well to represent a state of things in the country districts of England which was then deplored by every thoughtful man and woman in England. That condition of affairs is unhappily still more conspicuous in many parts of the country now, and in others, where it is perhaps less conspicuous, the evil is almost as great as it is in those villages where there is no melancholy series of derelict tenements to proclaim, albeit silently, that the habitation of the sons of the soil knows them no more. Year by year the agricultural population of the villages continues to dwindle away, and the congestion of the towns by men and women who are but partially and spasmodically employed becomes more manifest and alarming. From this in its turn come a risen as well as a rising generation reared in an unhealthy environment, grown and growing to feeble maturity without an adequate supply of light, air, and exercise. Next come Royal Commissions to inquire into the physical degeneration of our race, so that for the future the Blue-books may give chapter and verse in detail concerning a general truth that is painfully obvious; and all the time earnest and clever essayists busy their brains in seeking to find the cause of the desertion of the country by the sons and daughters of the soil, and in striving to suggest a remedy. The dulness of life in country villages and its deadly monotony is the most favoured explanation of the exodus. In the towns are to be found abundant opportunities for social intercourse, good and bad, lighted streets, amusements of a hundred kinds, many of them gratuitous, countless institutions for the public benefit. In a word, there is always something to look at, something to rouse the interests of the poorest. In the country there is nothing, or next to nothing, save the daily round and the common task, and they are, as Mr. Henry James would say, 'of a monotony' which is hardly to be borne. The point at which they cannot be endured at all comes when the sometime villager who has prospered—he who fails never reappears—comes down in patronising mood, extends his sympathy to his former associates, and expatiates at length upon the contrast

between the animation of life in London, Liverpool, or Birmingham, by comparison with that of the country.

Such being the explanation given, we see many most estimable efforts to exorcise the demon of dulness made by men and women who fondly hope that, if they succeed, the countrymen will stay in their native villages, will breathe sweet air unfouled by smoke, will sleep in daintily clean rooms with 'open jasmine-muffled lattices' (as a matter of fact a rustic would sooner die at once than sleep in a room with the window open), and will develop, with the help of the country's boundless store of nourishing food, the physical health and strength which are sadly to seek in the rising generation. So village clubs are organised, and the gentry devise concerts and theatricals in the village school, and the curate (the 'leg-break curate' of the familiar story, and a very useful member of society he is) busies himself with his cricket club, and so on. Heaven forbid that I should say a single word to discourage any such endeavours to make life in the villages a trifle less dreary, or that I should deny their operation for good so far as they go. But the fact remains that the exodus continues, and it continues because dulness is but a part of the evil to be contended against, is, in truth, in far too many parts of rural England, the direct consequence of a disease which is always present to the mind of the patient except when kindly sleep knits up his ravelled sleeve. The plain and terrible truth of the matter is that, in districts far wider and more numerous than the kind dwellers in towns and casual visitors to our pretty villages can be expected to realise, the agricultural labourer, his wife, and his children are half-starved from the beginning to the end of life. Men do not earn anything approaching to a living wage, and that is why the best of them flock to the towns, many of them to be no more seen, and why the clubs and the concerts and the theatricals, and all the paraphernalia of healthy gaiety fail to produce all the desired effect. *Panem et Circenses* was an intelligible cry; *Circenses sine pane* are an unintentional mockery and a failure. That is the hard and lamentable fact, and it is well that it should be known, since the wisest of physicians cannot prescribe effectually for the body politic, or for the physical body, until the disease has been diagnosed with precision.

To tell the squalid truth concerning the life of the country is not the fashion; and it is not at all a pleasant story in the telling; but it is a plain duty to make it known. The locality concerning the social state of which I desire to state some very depressing facts is, perhaps, exceptional in its misfortunes, although it is more

likely to be but an example in a fairly large class. No names will be mentioned that are not entirely fictitious, no topographical indications will be given by which a stranger could discover our home of poverty. A cap will be fitted to no man's head; and, although facts carefully ascertained must needs be stated, there is no desire to wound the susceptibilities of any living man. In fact, the whole object of writing is to make public the deplorable state of a humble and, it is feared, not an entirely exceptional community, in the hope that wiser men than I may be induced to devise some method for causing that, which is but too sadly true of the present, to be untrue and inconceivable in the future.

Broad roads of admirable surface pass our village on one side. Its long street runs at right angles to the greatest of them. The village is an island, an oasis of shady elms, in the midst of an ocean of cornland; and the cornland is some of the deepest and most fruitful to be found in England, insomuch that there is hardly a hedge or a tree to be seen upon it, for none of it must be wasted. In a good harvest, even when the corn has not been laid, the tall and close straw laughs at reaping and binding machines designed to garner the scanty crops of the American and Canadian prairies. It seems, indeed, to be the very heart of an agricultural community which ought to thrive if any agricultural community can thrive in these islands. It has manor-house, parsonages, big farmhouses, inns, little shops, and cottages, pretty enough to be reproduced without a particle of exaggeration by the scene-painter. The gardens are trim and gay; many a cottager grows roses worthy to be exhibited at the Temple show.

Roof, window, door,  
The very flowers are sacred to the poor.

Yes, and the pity of it is that they are sacred to the very poor, to a community constantly underfed and constantly underpaid, so that their beauty, and the care which it represents, are the more touching. In outward scenery, indeed, the village is, like the lady in the old ballad, a cheerful hypocrite, meeting the world with a smiling face, and it looks for all the world prosperous, tranquil, and typical. Hard by, and substantially part of the same community, is a hamlet, situate ecclesiastically in another parish, the structures in which practise no such hypocrisy, and offer no consolation to the most superficial observer. In it are a number of spacious houses, eighteenth century and earlier, which are being

permitted, without shame and without hindrance, to fall to pieces. Fantastic chimneys of red brick, mellowed by age and weather, lean in all directions; leaden casements, with here and there a pane of cracked glass, with ancient catches of beautifully involved ironwork, creak as the wind stirs them; walls have huge fissures in them; roofs, of thatch and tiles, are falling away piecemeal. The whole is an unspeakably sad picture of neglect and desolation; if the village street would serve for the scene of a cheerful rustic comedy of the type of the 'Country Girl,' the hamlet would be an appropriate setting for a tragedy of ruin and despair.

Yet, as a plain matter of fact, the village is, if anything, worse off than the hamlet, since houses have no feelings and it contains a greater sum of human misery. Once it boasted a resident squire, who inhabited the beautiful manor-house, farming some of his own land, employing gardeners, keepers, coachmen, grooms, and indoor servants. But long ago the manor-house and its lands passed into the ownership of a great and good but distant landowner, and here we are on the fringe of a large estate, which is never the part best looked after. One of our two farmers inhabits the manor-house, living simply, but holding land extending over many hundreds, if not thousands, of acres. The second, a relative of the first, occupies another of the half-dozen farmhouses of our village, and the remainder of them are let to middle-class folk of whom, as one of them, I may be permitted to say that they are not a tenth part as useful to their humbler neighbours as working farmers would be. They divide between them the services of one or two so-called gardeners, they buy a little from the village shops, they give some employment to the mason and the blacksmith—there is no carpenter—and that is all the use they are to the villagers. In the hamlet, where five farmers once lived and, presumably, made a living, there is now but one, and his business can hardly be described as farming. The hamlet looks the more miserable of the two aggregations of buildings, because the farmhouses are empty and derelict, that is all. The dominant fact that remains is that land formerly in the hands of nine or ten men, all of them farming on a considerable scale, is now absolutely in the hands of two men, and that their power over the people is irresistible. Let there be no misunderstanding. I do not say that this power is misused by either of our farmers; on the contrary, having regard to the influence which they might exert, it seems to me that they interfere openly but little. The fact is they have no need to interfere, for the people understand that their masters have absolute control over their

little destinies, and they are only too anxious to find out how to humour the wishes of those who have the power of giving employment, and of taking it away. 'You may say as if you offends one you offends ahl,' said a labourer to me not long since. It put the whole position in a nutshell.

Village and hamlet, then, live under a system of silent despotism ; but that, in itself, is no fatal obstacle to happiness. Some wise man (Hume, if memory serves correctly) has explained that under a despotism that is good the conditions of life may be every whit as tolerable as in the most absolutely free of democracies. I do not say that our despotism is, in itself or in feeling, an unkindly one, or that our despots do not do their duty to their subjects according to their lights. But 'by their fruits ye shall know them,' and when I look at the conditions of life in our village community I cannot help wishing that there were just a little more competition, just a slight increase in the number of men who demanded the work of the labourer. Let us look first at the all-important question of wages. I read with admiration in official books that recent investigation has shown the average earnings of the agricultural labourer in England to be 16s. a week. When I knew country life familiarly in Anglesey a quarter of a century ago, an agricultural labourer, hired by the half-year, received £36 a year and his board and lodging ; the lodging, it is true, was rough, and so was the food, but this last was abundant. In Carnarvonshire, owing to the proximity of the slate quarries with their demand for labour, wages were a trifle higher. In 'Highways and Byways in Sussex,' Mr. E. V. Lucas gives a delightful and obviously authentic account, which I transcribe *minus* dialect, of the conditions of the labourer's life in Sussex thirty years ago.

Out in the morning at four o'clock. Mouthful of bread and cheese and pint of ale. Then off to the harvest field. Reaping and mowing till eight. Then morning breakfast and small beer. Breakfast—a piece of fat pork as thick as your hat is wide. Then work till ten o'clock ; then a mouthful of bread and cheese and a pint of strong beer. Work till twelve. Then at dinner in the farmhouse ; sometimes a leg of mutton, sometimes a piece of ham and plum pudding. Then work till five ; then a nunch and a quart of ale. Nunch was cheese. 'Twas skimmed cheese though. Then work till sunset ; then home and have supper and a pint of ale.

This was in harvest time, when wages and work are apt to be heavy, and one is permitted to hope that the call upon *dura mes-sorum ilia* was not always so severe. But it is stated that the wages of the regular servants, the men 'in the house,' who were of course boarded and lodged, were from £3 10s. to £2 10s. per



month; or much the same as those of Anglesey. Of the Sussex of to-day I cannot speak with knowledge, but I do not think the Anglesey wages have fallen much, if at all.

Let us contrast, not Sussex in the golden days, not North Wales (which, being largely pastoral, has felt depression less severely than agricultural England), but the official average with that of our little community. There is not a labourer in the village who would not regard 16s. a week as wealth beyond the dreams of avarice. The so-called gardener of whom I employ an aliquot part (he sometimes 'gives me an extra day,' *totidem verbis*, at a price) earns the princely sum of half-a-crown *per diem* from me, and I have been accused of raising the tariff. He is much richer than his neighbours, and once, when I was discussing with him the problem how those in the stratum below him contrived to live at all, he propounded the opinion, 'I think every man ought to be able to earn two bob a day.' That is surely a sufficiently modest ambition. Unfortunately, those who attain to it are few and far between. The average wages of labourers—carters earn a shilling or two more—are 10s. precisely. They are hired by the week, and, if the weather is so wet that 'us can't get on the laand,' and there is no work available under cover, they lose a day's wages. In winter superfluous hands are turned off, just as they are at manufactories and works when employment is slack. Cottage rent is from 1s. to 2s. 6d.; club payments must be kept up at all hazards by men whose earnings are thus small and precarious. That men so situated contrive to exist and to bring up their families is nothing short of a miracle; but it is a miracle of hardship and of patience under constant suffering.

It may be suggested that, although this is the harsh letter of the labourer's contract of service, there is room for generous interpretation of it. Room, indeed, there is in abundance, but it remains unoccupied. Here is a case of very recent occurrence in our village, followed by another, not so recent and not in our village, to show that our farmer acted in the spirit of his contemporaries in the district. Not long before the March quarter-day the wife of a stalwart young labourer receiving 10s. a week presented him with twins. About the same time he was bitten in the hand while handling a rat incautiously. The wound did not heal rapidly, probably because the man's blood was poor from inadequate nourishment, and an abscess compelled him to relinquish work and 'go on his club' immediately before quarter-day. A quarterly payment being due, the club officers were clearly bound to deduct

that from the first payment of sick benefit, which left exactly 2s. to be handed over to the incapacitated man, with a wife and twins, for a week's sustenance. But 1s. 10d. were due to him for wages, and of that his master deducted 1s. for a week's rent of the cottage. That was the last straw, and I protest that it is difficult to say whether my heart bleeds or my blood boils to hear that this finely built and sturdy young fellow broke down altogether, and forgot that he was a man, over the deduction of that shilling.

Was this an act of cruelty on the part of the farmer, a man who holds many hundreds of acres and owns some of them in fee, a man who knew that he was absolutely safe of his rent, unless the labourer died, in the long run? Certainly it was not an act of conscious cruelty. It was but conduct in accordance with the custom of the country. Not so very long ago, near another village in the same county, a labourer engaged in the task of 'shrouding' an elm (cutting off the side branches for firewood and pea-sticks) fell from his perch and lay unconscious until somebody found him and took him home. Not permanently the worse for his fall, he returned to work in a day or two and went to receive his wages as usual on pay-day. To whom his master—

'John, do ee mind about what time it wor as ee fell down?'

'I thinks it wor just about eleven.'

And the wages for that day, meagre as they would have been anyhow, were reduced *pro ratâ*.

Even when the labourer is not laid up by illness or accident, when it is not too wet to go on the land, and when he is not turned off as a superfluous hand in winter, he has a cruel struggle to make both ends meet. He and his family subsist for the most part, and to quite as great an extent as the Irish peasant, on potatoes, the produce of the allotment; and when the potato crop is poor and diseased, as it was all but universally last year, by reason of the wet, his uncomplaining suffering is pitiful. One reads about gaunt faces in connection with important strikes, in which strike pay is equal to full wages in our village, but one sees them here. Recently, when a spell of fine weather in early spring caused all the hands turned off for the winter to be in demand, I failed to recognise the cheery face of a carter who touched his hat to me at the station; and it was only after a while that I realised the face to be that of a man turned off for the winter, to whom I had given a few days' work, not for charity, but in my own interests, at Christmas time. He had been emaciated, worn with hunger in fact; he was now an entirely changed man.

Sometimes we are able to do some small act of kindness by way of alleviating the prevailing suffering, sometimes to give work, the results of which enure for our own benefit, and in each case the resultant gratitude is touching in the extreme. It is no mere matter of lip-service. Our villagers, indeed, civil and soft-spoken though they are as a rule, are not voluble, and their vocabulary is limited. Those who are voluble are usually impostors also. In the case of the others the bread cast upon the waters comes back after many days. One cannot boast effectively over a pseudonym—and it is clear that I must use one—and there is no matter for boasting in the fact that, last year, we gave milk for a month or so to support the fourteenth puny child of a woman whose husband earned 12s. a week. But in the autumn came humble presents of cans of blackberries and of mushrooms. Again to my friend of the changed countenance I gave nothing but work and very modest pay. But it happened that the work was the excavation of an ancient ditch, and in it he found a copper coin, a token probably, bearing a representation of Lady Godiva, in which we were interested. He said little or nothing; but a day or two later he brought as an offering a bag containing some score of ancient coins, or coins more or less ancient, which he had turned up with his spade in the course of a long life of labour. It seemed almost a shame to accept them; but to have refused them would have been to inflict a grievous wound.

Our villagers marry and are given in marriage, and the potato diet, as in Ireland, is accompanied by large families; but it is regarded as part of the natural course of events that death should thin those families abundantly. 'I do hope,' said a ministering kinswoman of the mother of the twins, 'that if the Lard takes either of 'em, it'll be the little gell.' To a friendly suggestion concerning the danger of allowing father, mother, and twins to occupy the same bed, she lent an approving ear, but not by reason of the danger of overlying. 'You see, maam, if 'e was to be half-asleep in the night an' to feel something moving, he might think it was a 'arse; an' then, like as not, he 'it out.' She herself, in days of motherhood long gone by, had nursed children when she had no sustenance for herself or for them beyond hot water run through a teapot containing a few crusts of bread. The pathos of these simple facts needs no emphasis.

In one respect our village is better off than many another in these parts that is more prosperous. Milk can be bought; and, strange as it may seem to dwellers in towns, that is by no means

the universal experience in the country. Within ten miles is another village, where no milk could be bought until the parson, rightly seeing how wrong it was that children should be reared without the chance of absorbing the one food which is absolutely essential to the proper development of a child, himself established a dairy and sold the milk. His successor, being a townsman pure and simple, does not keep cows, would indeed probably lose a good deal of money if he did, and the village, which could afford to buy milk, is reduced to the condensed stuff again. It is said to be very nutritious; but, as one soon discovers at sea, it becomes monotonous to the point of nausea. Here milk is to be bought by those who have the money; but such luxury as the delivery of milk at the consumer's door is unheard of. Nor is the supply always to be relied upon, for during the last winter, when the few milk-sellers had apparently conspired to have most of their cows dry simultaneously, even our modest supply by the day could not be got from one establishment, but had to be contributed by two.

Sanitation is, it needs hardly to be said, held to be a matter of no importance, and neither village nor hamlet has any uniform system of drainage. Some of us use cesspools, others do without them, and nobody cares much. Epidemics, when they come, are severe; but they are regarded as a 'judgment,' as indeed, being the just punishment of neglect, they are; but that is not what those who use the term intend to convey. Substantially, too, there is no adequate water-supply for a population of some hundreds of persons. There is, it is true, a village pump, fully half a mile distant from some of the cottages, of which the water is officially described as 'passable' and no more. There are also a number of wells, most of them suspect, some of them condemned a year or two ago by the sanitary authority. For my own part I have 'two wells of excellent water,' according to the conditions under which the house now mine was formerly offered for sale, but on analysis, when there had not been any chance of pollution for years from the house, which was empty, or from middens appertaining to it, for there were none, it was condemned without hesitation on the ground that it was gravely polluted by nitrites. So we get water for the house, as a favour, from a neighbour whose well is placed above the midden and pigsties which probably poison mine. Even that we dare not analyse; and there are many cottages which have no water-supply at all. It may be said that this is an illegal state of things; that owners are bound to supply water if it can be done 'at reasonable cost,' and so on. The answer

is that a labourer at 10s. a week cannot afford to set the law in motion at all ; least of all can he do so when the defendant landlord is also his employer. Moreover, so long as the authority which is supposed to look to these matters is local, it is idle to expect that anything will be done ; for the question whether money shall be expended lies with the largest ratepayers, directly or indirectly, and, to put the matter bluntly, they are too ignorant to care whether the water they drink themselves is pure, and therefore they are not in the least likely to recommend a public water-supply to be provided for others principally at their cost. This particular danger, that of permitting local government to be in the hands of men who are directly interested in keeping down the expenditure of money locally, is, however, so far-reaching in its ramifications that it must not be entered into here.

Enough, perhaps, has been written to show that in one of the parts of England most bountifully endowed by nature the rural exodus may be regarded as the most natural process in the world. The wonder, indeed, is, not so much that the process continues, as that it does not go on much faster. For my own part, frankly I do what I can by advice to accelerate it on rational lines, pointing out to young fellows that in this or that county there is a demand for labour at far better wages than can be earned here, and that, to a young man who respects himself, life in the army offers a far better position than can be obtained in our village. But they will not go. 'I don't think I should like to leave the village' is the stock answer, even when one suggests a lucrative job at some place within a short distance. In fact the system has entered into their souls, as it entered into those of their fathers before them, and there is no spirit left in them. It is a desperate and a pitiable state of things, for which, possibly, there may be a remedy ; although, to be frank, none suggests itself to me. Why, then, do I write ? Partly, it may be, by way of relieving my mind, and in the faint hope that wiser heads, face to face with facts, may be more fruitful of suggestion than I can be ; but principally because it is desirable to prove that, while the rural exodus is justly regarded as a mischievous movement generally, there are districts in which it would be outrageous to attempt to check it, in which it is even a matter of duty to speed it, until such time as the labourer in those districts shall cease to be half starved all his life's days.

PALAMEDES.

*THE KING'S REVOKE.<sup>1</sup>*

BY MRS. MARGARET L. WOODS.

## CHAPTER VI.

ON a foggy London morning a blond young man, with well-curled hair and voluminous neck-cloth, sat reading his 'Times' newspaper at a window in certain chambers not far from Piccadilly.

The traffic of the great thoroughfare roared at a little distance, muffled and invisible except for the red glare of link-boys' torches reflected on the fog and the dim yellow of fitting carriage-lamps. Nothing was plainly discernible from the window beyond the low iron railing which divided the territory of the chambers from the side street on which they looked; but a hackney coach drawing up there might be divined. Two gentlemen in modish coachman's coats, the high collars raised to their ears, and large mufflers, descended from it and entered the house. The hour was unfashionably early for visits, but there was nothing else to make their appearance of remark. Five or ten minutes later there was a knock at his door, and the two gentlemen came in—Lord Hove first, behind him Sir Frederick, looming gaunt through the fog which filled even the room. The usual salutations passed, delivered by him in a low mysterious tone, when he had softly closed the door.

'You may deem this imprudent of us, Captain Dillon,' he said, 'but even the eyes of Bonaparte's spies can hardly penetrate such Cimmerian darkness. Moreover, as we have a relative residing in these chambers, he has served as an excuse for our entrance.'

'Quite unnecessary,' commented Lord Hove; 'the porter is a Scotchman.'

'I understand his Royal Highness saw you himself on Wednesday,' continued Sir Frederick, 'and was favourably impressed—very favourably. We are prepared to hand over the necessary funds in the form advised by our agent, Count d'Haguerty. He says that the necklace shown to his lordship and myself is as

<sup>1</sup> Copyright, 1905, by Mrs. Margaret L. Woods, in the United States of America.

convenient a way of carrying them as any other. When it comes to a question of breaking it up we trust you to be guided by his advice.'

Patrick bowed with a sphinx-like countenance.

'D'Haguerty was to meet us here,' continued Sir Frederick; 'a Swiss gentleman, one of the most valuable agents of our Government. He was in the Swiss Guards of the late unfortunate King of France, escaped by a miracle, and has since served against Bonaparte in most of the armies of Europe.'

'By such a miracle,' interpolated his lordship, 'that the Count's existence seems to me an Irish bull. Ah, speak of an angel!'

A servant was just showing in a gentleman to see Captain Dillon. The room was somewhat small, and the gentleman was so large he seemed by himself to crowd one end of it. As soon as the servant had closed the door, Sir Frederick said:

'Upon my word, this is strange! Count d'Haguerty, sir, I am happy to see you. Gentlemen, let me make you acquainted with each other. Count d'Haguerty, formerly in the service of the late King of France—Captain Dillon, in the service of King Ferdinand VII. of Spain.'

The Count's large hand, fat but firm, swallowed Patrick's as he smiled down on the Captain.

'What! This youngster?' said the Count to himself; but aloud: 'My dear sir, charmed to make your acquaintance at last!'

'This mantle of darkness is appropriate to us conspirators, Count,' observed Sir Frederick jocosely. 'Our London fog is a cloud which may have on occasion a silver lining.'

'For footpads, Sir Frederick, and, my faith, for conspirators, as you say, if such a name can be given to gentlemen engaged in so honourable an enterprise.'

The Count's accent, foreign of course, since he was a Swiss, and his appearance seemed to stir some dim associations in Patrick's mind. He was a fine man, in spite of his seven-and-forty years and the touch of obesity, which was yet not enough to rob him of activity.

His face, with its fleshy nose and mouth and chin, was of a sallow colour, not very different in tone from the greasy hair piled high above his forehead by a fashionable barber, the side whiskers and thin ferociously twisted moustache, which gave him an air at once foreign and military. His back, however, was not military: it was a roundish civilian back. He carried his hat and gloves on



his hip, flourished a gold-headed cane, wore a smile and talked in a full genial voice.

'You are provided with all the necessary papers, Count?' queried Sir Frederick, after some casual conversation about weather and the roads.

D'Haguerty shrugged his shoulders.

'All, milor! No, that I cannot say. *Feuilles de route* and passports cannot now be procured in such abundance as formerly; but one real treasure I have obtained—an order from the French Ministry of Marine, blank and signed.'

'Is it possible!' exclaimed Sir Frederick. 'Yet why should one be astonished? In a nation whose very ambassadors take bribes, where can you expect to find integrity?'

'*Canaglia!* A gentleman has sentiments too noble to be tempted by vile gains!' cried the Count, his hand in his bosom.

'Of course, of course,' replied Sir Frederick, and took out his watch. 'I see I am overstaying my time. If you will dine, as arranged, at Colonel Vesey's to-morrow evening, gentlemen, he will give you an autograph letter from the most exalted Personage in the Realm to the King of Spain; and Mr. Sugden will meet you there, bringing the requisite sum, partly in French notes and gold, but chiefly in diamonds. It would hardly be desirable for you to be seen at the Admiralty, but the Admiral will meet you at any place you like to appoint to arrange the details of the expedition. We desire to provide a priest, silver-gilt sacramental plate, and other articles, to which, we understand, his Majesty the King of Spain is accustomed, on board the ship which will receive him, and we should be glad of Captain Dillon's advice and assistance. Good day, Count; good day, Captain Dillon. I wish you both good day.'

He had taken up his hat.

'A moment,' cried Lord Hove. 'I have something here I must not forget to deliver.'

He drew out a small sealed packet, and said, looking at Patrick Dillon:

'This is a bill on Messrs. Gérard, the bankers at Tours, for three thousand francs. My son has a friend there, a *détenu*, to whom he wishes to send this money. Messrs. Gérard are forbidden, to be sure, to cash bills for the English; but for persons of position they are always willing to do so privately, and they know my son and his handwriting very well. He will be greatly obliged if you will deliver this to Mr. Erskine Charlesworth, whose address Madame

de Ferriet will be able to tell you, and—— Well, well, of course you cannot encumber an important enterprise like yours with the affairs of a mere private person ; but this Charlesworth appears to be a clever fellow, well acquainted with the country, who might prove of service to you. And if he should happen to come aboard the same ship as an Illustrious Person, why, it would do no harm to anyone, and give infinite satisfaction to my son and Lady Maria.'

'Very good, milor. I will do what I am able,' responded d'Haguerty, stretching out an artificially bleached hand, with rings on the fingers, for the packet. Lord Hove feigned neither to see nor to hear.

'It is something of a favour to ask you, Captain Dillon ; and if you prefer to leave the matter alone I shall not take offence.'

'My lord, I think I owe you something in the matter of the necklace, and even were that not so, I should be very happy to deliver your parcel to Mr. Charlesworth. Unless, indeed, we find our way into a French fortress, and if that is the case everyone will have to cross out our account.'

Patrick Dillon took the packet, and in a minute Lord Hove and Sir Frederick had bowed themselves out, and the two colleagues were left face to face. Patrick observed a change pass over d'Haguerty's face and bearing as soon as the door had closed behind these gentlemen ; and it was a change which, on the whole, did not displease him. That the Count was wearing a mask had been plain to him, and he had been speculating what kind of a face was underneath it. Now he saw. It was a vulgar face : sensual, perhaps cunning, but the face of a man of courage, a man with the necessary wits ; of one, moreover, who had no appearance of ill-humour.

Some slight compliments passed between them—words without meaning.

'You do not smoke, Count ? No ? But you will excuse me. I am so far a Spaniard I cannot think well without my cigar, or at any rate my *pachillo*.'

Patrick lighted a small cigar, about the size of a cigarette, and, sitting sideways in an elbow-chair, threw his leg over the arm. His blond face assumed an expression of great sweetness and innocence, and his eyelids and long lashes drooped over his eyes till it might have been supposed he did not look beyond the curl of smoke lazily rising from his *pachillo*. His colleague sat on the

other side of the table regarding him between the candle flames with a gravity which bordered on anxiety.

'Sir,' said d'Haguerty at length, in deep emphatic tones, 'you are a very young man.'

'I am, Count,' replied Patrick, and blew two streams of smoke out of his nostrils, Spanish fashion. 'I am,' he repeated dreamily; then, flashing on d'Haguerty a brilliant but somewhat enigmatic smile, added, in quite another voice: 'Don't you wish you were, too?'

The Count, who was seriously studying his colleague, was put somewhat out of countenance by this sudden thrust.

'Well, well,' he said, 'I will not deny I should be willing to be a few years younger myself; but if I were, Captain Dillon, they'd not send you and me hunting in a couple. I am an old campaigner—one that has fought half over Europe, and had his share of secret and dangerous enterprises; but I give you my word, sir, I have never been engaged on a more difficult one than this; and a very great credit it is to you, my dear Captain, to have been chosen for such a mission while still in the flower of your youth. That you are already distinguished in arms I know. Are not the sons of Erin the bravest of the brave? Yet this is rather a diplomatic than a military undertaking, and it demands a certain secrecy—a certain wiliness, I may say—which may come with difficulty to one who wears on his countenance the stamp of youth's ingenuous candour.'

Here the Count paused and looked carefully across the table to see in what spirit his words were being received. But his colleague maintaining silence and a mild demeanour, he resumed:

'Having, as you observed, Captain, so much the advantage of me in youth, I venture to hope you will allow me the poor advantage of my years and consent to be guided by my advice in a business which calls for the wariness of age.'

'It is very likely I shall be guided by your advice, Count,' replied Patrick pleasantly; 'but I hate making promises, because I generally keep them. Meantime'—he rose from his seat, throwing the rest of his *pachillo* into the fire—'I hope you will be guided by mine in the matter of what you drink; for I must not continue to neglect the duties of hospitality. They have a little red vinegar they call French wine in the house, and the brandied stuff ridiculously termed wine of Oporto over here can be fetched from the tavern. Pray take your choice, Count. But what I really advise is a taste of this.'

He took a squat black bottle out of a corner cupboard above his head.

'Tis the oldest and finest whiskey in all Ireland, I am told by my cousin, Terence O'Farril, who gave it to me ; and if *experientia docet*, sure Terence ought to know.'

Now whiskey was not at that time frequently seen in London.

'Whiskey !' cried d'Haguerty with a gleam in his eye. 'I have tasted the stuff, I believe, Captain, and would be glad to taste it again.'

In a moment Patrick had transferred a tray, with a bottle of water and two glasses, from the sideboard to the table, and poured a generous allowance of the spirit for d'Haguerty and a small one for himself.

'I drink your health, Count,' he said, 'and the happy issue of our partnership. I hope your liquor's to your taste.'

'Captain,' said the Count solemnly, rolling the fluid in his mouth, 'there's no wine in the world that's better than this.'

'None so good for us two to be making an acquaintance over and wishing ourselves good luck ; for it's Irish liquor, with devil a bit of Spanish or Swiss in it. And what else should you and I be drinking between us when I'm an Irishman, and, if I'm not greatly mistaken, Count d'Haguerty, so are you.'

As he said this Patrick looked the Count in the ball of the eye and saw him change colour and put down his glass with a chink, staring amazement. Before amazement could give way to anger the young man, smiling with peculiar winningness, stretched his hand across the table and said, with a touch of the brogue :

'Sure you are not going to be angry, Count, when it's the biggest compliment I know I'm paying you. If it's a difficult business, a business that wants courage and wits as well, that I'm pledged to, then, say I, give me an Irishman for my partner—an Irishman against the world.'

The big man opposite hung yet a few moments between wrath and admiration ; then the admiration won.

'Shake hands, young gentleman,' he said. 'You have shown very extraordinary penetration, and that's no ill quality for an enterprise like ours. Yet I take it as something of a liberty, after all, to be called Irishman to my face by a man that has my own authority for it I am a gentleman of Switzerland.'

'No, on my honour, not your own authority, Count ; you are mistaken. Only Sir Frederick's. And you had not been five

minutes in the room before I was promising a candle to St. Patrick for sending me a good Irishman for my companion, instead of the mongrel Swiss that long-legged owl had been discoursing upon.'

But for a man who had prided himself on his power of disguise to be thus detected at once by a mere infant, as it were, and that when his assumed character had been worn so long that it had become almost natural to him, could not be but mortifying. The Count fell into a short silence, except that he asked for some more whiskey.

'Well, damme, after all it's of little importance if you have guessed the country I was born in,' he said at length, 'when it's so long ago I had almost forgotten the circumstance myself, and ought to be obliged to you, sir, for reminding me of it. We'll drink to old Erin, Captain—a country like a charming woman, for the worse she treats us the more we adore her, and though he's a fool that won't love her, he's a bigger that will tie himself to her for life. But the truth is it was a bit of folly that took me away myself. I was a wild sort of gossoon five-and-twenty years ago, and one fine day I found the climate wasn't wholesome for me, and I'd best try the air of the Continent. In the course of my travels I visited Lausanne, and happened to be there when an officer of the late King of France arrived, recruiting for the Swiss Guards. But things were getting hot then in France, and the Swiss, who are damned shrewd fellows, wouldn't go there for love or money. But my misfortunes had brought me into a situation very unbecoming a gentleman and one that traces his descent from kings, and I thought I had found a fine chance to strip off my liv—I mean to adopt the profession of arms, the only one suited to my birth and inclinations. As to the French officer, sure he was delighted to get me, for devil another Swiss he took back with him to France.'

'And how did you escape the massacre of the Swiss Guards?' asked Patrick. 'I have heard the horrid story from eye-witnesses.'

'I'll tell you all about it some other day,' replied the Count, sucking up the last drop of whiskey-and-water; but he did not wish to tell it then, for it was a very good story, and he had told it so often he had come to believe it himself; yet he felt it might need a little revision before being submitted to so sharp a pair of young eyes.

'No, no more whiskey, Captain. I've been a sober Swiss this quarter of a century, and don't mix my business with potations;

yet for once I'll own you've coaxed the whiskey in and the Irishman out; and before we go any further tell me how the devil you discovered him.'

Patrick smiled. 'Because, though I have never been in Ireland, my father is an Irishman.'

In truth, he had recognised d'Haguerty's nationality by the workings of a kind of feminine instinct, stirred to activity, perhaps, by a word of Lord Hove's.

'I've not confessed to my country,' said the Count, 'since I was a lad in Paris. There were some Irishmen there making common cause with the Sansculottes, and they wanted me to join them. My faith, if I'd but done it I should be a marshal and a duke by this time, and maybe married to one of Bonaparte's sisters. But youth is full of generous illusions, my boy, and I couldn't bring myself to fight for a parcel of bloody-minded Republican rascallions. Besides, I thought they would be beat.'

'So they would have been if Europe had known its own mind,' pronounced Patrick, ready to review the whole question. But the conduct of Europe, past, present, and to come was totally indifferent to Count d'Haguerty—formerly Mr. Haggarty—except in so far as it affected his own precarious fortunes.

'This agreeable conversation is making me forget that time flies, as the proverb says,' he observed, pulling out his watch. 'I have promised to visit the owner of the *Sauterelle* this morning. Do you choose to come with me, sir?'

The fog was lifting, or at any rate shifting its quarters, and as they walked arm-in-arm along Piccadilly the link-boys were extinguishing their lights. They soon turned up Bond Street, where the Count did not omit to peer under every smart bonnet and feathered hat that they met. But, after all, these were exceedingly few, for it took less than a fog to keep within doors women condemned to wear low dress and sandal shoes. Nevertheless, there were a certain number of carriages outside the shops. One, sombre but handsome, was waiting at Hancock's for its mistress, whom the great Mr. Hancock himself was showing to the door when the two gentlemen arrived. The lady was dressed in a handsome pelisse of black Lyons silk, a long Alençon lace veil hung from her tunnel-shaped beaver bonnet, and she held a bundle of tracts in a French-gloved hand.

'I've often observed, Mr. Hancock,' she was saying in a loud pulpit voice, 'how the Lord prospers the affairs of faithful persons.'

Oh, they do indeed find special providences awaiting them at every turn.'

Here she broke off to complain of the ill-cut Woodstock gloves she had been compelled to buy in default of French ones, but did not forget to bestow upon him a bundle of her last tract on the errors of Popery. Mr. Hancock, who combined a sharp ferret-eyed face with a stout little body, kept on bowing and washing his hands with imaginary soap, like something wound up. Meantime our pair of gentlemen passed him unnoticed, and standing at the counter near the door, asked to see some ladies' gloves. Hancock's shop would now cut a sorry figure compared to that of any provincial draper, but it was then the largest and most fashionable establishment in Bond Street, crowded on fine mornings, and even to-day not without fair customers. The Count was so much engaged in staring at these through his spying-glass, and Patrick in blushing for his conduct, that they allowed the proprietor of the shop to pass them unchallenged after he had finished his series of bows to the departing chariot of the pious peeress. Mr. Hancock's smile gave way to a harassed irritated expression as he passed by towards his little room at the back. When he had reached the end of the shop he turned and looked down the ranks of pale young men in white neckcloths standing behind his counters, with fierce ferret eyes, as if meditating on whom he would fasten. Fortunately for them his attention was diverted by a young gentleman who came up the shop with the evident intention of accosting the master. Mr. Hancock replaced his polite expression.

'Sir,' said Patrick, 'the gentleman yonder and myself would be glad to speak to you on private business.'

Now the gentlemen who not infrequently called on private business were generally known to Mr. Hancock. It was therefore with an air of reserve that he showed these two into his private parlour and inquired their pleasure.

'You don't happen to have any cognac or French wines to dispose of, eh, Mr. Hancock?' inquired the Count.

'Cognac, sir? Wine? Oh dear no! What a very strange question. I have nothing of the kind.'

'No, Mr. Hancock,' replied the Count sternly, 'and, what's more, you won't have any silks, or laces, or French gloves neither, not till the *Sauterelle* comes in again, which will be some day, or never, according to your behaviour.'

'I really don't know what you're talking about, sir,' returned



Hancock, changing colour and crumpling up the tracts against Popery.

'Come, come, Mr. Hancock, don't let's waste time. The Government's had an eye on the *Sauterelle* for a long while—ever since she knocked splinters out of the Revenue cutter off the Needles—but they little thought to find a respectable citizen like you chief owner of a smuggling craft which comes devilish near being a pirate, sir—devilish near!'

'Sir,' said Hancock, choking between anger and fear, 'I suppose you want to get money out of me.'

For even Hancock had the Englishman's instinct for a gentleman, and perceived that for all his smart varnish the Count was none.

'No, Mr. Hancock, only money's worth. The *Sauterelle* was caught off Freshwater Gate a month ago.'

'You come too late with that story,' cried Hancock, forgetting to deny his interest in it. 'It's a piece of gossip someone else has brought me already this morning; but it's a lie, or it would have been in the "Times" newspaper. Whoever heard of the Revenue officers making a haul like that and keeping it to themselves?'

'The Board of Revenue has had nothing to do with it. The Admiralty has managed the affair of the *Sauterelle*. Perhaps you would like to see her bill of lading and some other papers which were intended to have come into your hands before now.'

D'Haguerty laid a packet of commercial-looking papers upon the table. The draper tore the tracts across with a nervous movement, threw them on the floor, and appeared to immerse himself in the papers while he endeavoured to collect his ideas.

'It's a heavy blow for you, Mr. Hancock—that can't be denied,' commented the Count cheerfully, twirling his spying glass in his hand. 'A man so respected, so well known, in your trade—and at Lady Portelsea's chapel, too. The loss of reputation alone is a serious matter, and I fear the Government will be rather disposed to make an example than to show leniency towards you.'

Hancock groaned.

'I should have thought you were of a prudent disposition,' continued the Count. 'You would have done better to have been satisfied with your luggers and *chasse-marées*. But even the *Sauterelle* might have gone on for a year or two if it had not been for those nine-pounders. You were mad to arm her, Mr. Hancock.'

‘I said so!’ screamed Hancock. ‘It was that devil of a Lefroy, and the Frenchmen backed him up.’

‘Fie, sir; you should use the consolations of religion rather than those of profane language. What did Lady Portelsea say about special providences? How if there should be one waiting for you even round this corner?’

‘Pish, sir,’ snapped the draper; ‘there is a time for all things. We are talking business now, and I should be obleeged if you would leave my religion out of the question.’

‘But I’m serious, my good man. There’s a way out of this, and I’m come to show it you. You have three partners on the other side of the water—Meunier of Nantes and two others at Tours, whose names we desire to have.’

‘Do I understand you are tempting me to turn King’s evidence?’ asked Hancock.

‘Why, how could I? Do you think the King’s writ runs the other side of the water? No; I’ll tell you our terms, and, my faith, you may reckon it lucky that the Government offers terms to one that’s little better than a pirate. But it happens that we’re interested in certain English prisoners at Tours, and we wish to help them escape. Now a gang of fair traders like yours, having its agents in touch with each other from the seacoast up to Tours, may be of great service to us if it chooses. You follow me, Mr. Hancock? If we succeed in bringing our men away, we return the *Sauterelle* to her owners all complete except for the nine-pounders; and for one year after she has returned she may have a free run so far as we on this side are concerned. But it is, in fact, your colleagues on the other side to whom we make this offer; for of what service can you be to us? Captain Lefroy is at Portsmouth, in durance vile for the present. If you agree to our proposal, we will find means to send him across to your partners bearing letters from you explaining and recommending our plans to the consideration of M. Meunier of Nantes and the other gentlemen of Tours.’

Hancock’s twisted little face had lost the unwonted lines of anguish, and resumed its usual ones of alert and perspicacious greed. He awoke, as it were, from a nightmare of destruction to find himself face to face with a bargain, and a good one; for the *Sauterelle* had already more than paid her cost, and could bring in a magnificent profit if she ran perfectly free for a whole year.

‘But your authorisation, sir?’ he questioned sharply. ‘You

can hardly expect me to take your word for all this when I don't so much as know your name.'

'The Admiralty does not care to appear in this matter more than can be avoided, so you must not on any account apply there, Mr. Hancock. I will write you the private address of an official with whom you may communicate. But you must lose no time, sir; you must make up your mind.'

'If the affair stands as you say,' returned Hancock, with decision, 'I shall have little difficulty about that. It may not be so easy to induce my French partners to run such a risk.'

The Count shrugged his shoulders.

'We make it worth their while.'

Then, assuming his usual obsequious smile, the arch-respectable Mr. Hancock bowed his unwelcome visitors down his shop between two rows of pale young men in white neckcloths.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE Atlantic heaved smoothly, just lifting in a long swell. On its shining surface was spread the last tawny brightness of the West, but through the brightness was growing perceptible the cold and steely colour of the ocean, its deeps already cognisant of night. Belle-Ile floated at once clear and dim, a rich cloud-coloured shape against the fading sky. The great three-decker's pile of snowy sails, all set to catch the mild westerly breeze, had glowed like an Alpine peak in the changing glories of the sunset as she had glided in, a thing more beautiful in majesty than any that now walks the sea, and followed, as a queen is followed by her attendant ladies, by three 'meaner beauties' of the wave. Now the little squadron cast anchor, and lay under bare spars, rising and falling on that vast and gently breathing bosom as peacefully as though they had lain in Plymouth Sound. Yet these were his Britannic Majesty's ships, and the coast a mile away was the coast of France. The gunners in the forts at Belle-Ile and Quimper swore in their fierce moustaches that the insolence of these English passed all bounds. They patrolled the coast of France as though it were their own, watching the river mouths and the harbours, and anchoring at their ease in the shelter of islands and promontories. Not long ago, for example, they had landed on the island of Houat and carried off a commissary of police who had made himself

unpopular there. They lay with impudent frequency between Belle-Ile and the mainland when westerly gales were blowing; but the officers of the battery, with their glasses to their eyes, wondered what was the meaning of the ships yonder coming in in fair weather and lying nearer the coast than was their custom.

The country folk, for their part, did not, like the soldiers, smart under the insult of these hostile presences, and had almost ceased to listen to the panic voices which from time to time proclaimed an armed descent of the enemy, and counselled a hurried and universal flight of the peaceful population. These almost phantom ships, these silent sentinels eternally pacing the frontiers of an ocean empire, would have become to them of less account than passing clouds had the shore-dwellers themselves had no business to ply on the great waters; but when these hovering visitants appeared the coasting-boats and fishing-vessels must fly to shelter, like small birds when the hawk is on the wing. Worst of all, the smuggling trade, so much more profitable and interesting than any other, must lie fallow.

Constantly, yet very aimlessly, these sea sentries seemed to have been patrolling the Breton coast of late. But some aim they must have, and the opinion commonly held both at *tables-d'hôte*, where commercials congregate, and in taverns, where peasants and fishermen drink sour wine, was that they were waiting for the *Sauterelle*. This schooner, which supine local authorities had professed to regard as a corsair built to prey on British commerce, had slipped out of the Gulf of Morbihan one dark January morning, and no certain news of her had since come to hand. A consignment of English goods had long been anxiously awaited by respectable firms in Nantes and Tours, and by the wilder spirits who served them. They hoped she might be lying perdué in some distant harbour, feared she had fallen into the hands of the enemy. But throughout the Morbihan, remembering the guns she had certainly carried, the rumour grew that her captain, having successfully landed his cargo, had taken her out on to the trade routes of the Atlantic, where she was becoming the terror of British commerce.

Jacques Martin, bailiff, farmer, and smuggler, had heard that story at the village wineshop on the day after the ships came in, but he said nothing. He lived in a patched-up portion of the monastery of St. Gildas-de-Loheac, on the headland a mile from the village. The Blues had burnt the convent nearly twenty years ago, and torn the bodies of the Priors and the de Ferriët

de Loheacs out of the chapel vaults. Still, the ruins stood up tall and dark above the dark and caverned cliffs, while the mighty Atlantic beat like muffled drums in the hollows under them, and the salt winds wailed dismally through the roofless cells. Pale lights were sometimes seen reflected on the high broken arch of the chapel, or glimmering faintly behind the naked tracery of the windows. The *douaniers* did not pay great attention to St. Gildas-de-Loheac, since it was on a dangerous coast and far from commercial centres. They and other strangers had often been told that the peasantry would not go near the monastery ruins after dark.

Outside the containing wall of the monastery which ran across the headland, facing a bay on the southern side, and set deep in wind-cleft trees, was the Château of Loheac. That, too, had been burnt, but the old gardens remained, falling in stately terraces to the sea below a modern house built by Madame Gérard, whose father had bought the lands of the monastery and those of the de Ferriet family from the Revolutionary Government.

When Jacques Martin heard them saying in the wineshop that the *Sauterelle* was winning a rich harvest out there on the Atlantic, and would never be caught by the English, he wished it were true. But he knew it was not.

Jacques Martin was not a lover of vigils. He was a substantial man now, thanks to the *Sauterelle*, and to the lesser craft which had preceded her; but he kept his frugal peasant habits, and, except at lambing or calving times, went to bed early to save candles. Yet on the third night after the arrival of the English ships a bright light was seen proceeding from the window of his house. Now from the village it could not be seen, but a gap in the ruinous walls of the monastery framed and focussed it to the eyes of the Mayor, who dwelt in the solitary windmill on a gentle slope to the North. He was a new Mayor, appointed because the only other man in the district who was free from any taint of royalism was lately dead; yet even he was not a true adherent of the Empire. His half-empty sleeve, with the iron hook at the end, was a memento of the earliest revolutionary war. He wore a shirt open at the neck, a red cap over loose tags of grey hair, and hated the English, not as the foes of the Emperor, but as the friends of tyrants. The nearness of their ships excited his nerves. That night he dreamt that the Rosbifs had landed, and that he was driving them into the sea at the head of the villagers. The dream was so vivid that when

he woke he jumped out of bed and opened the window. The night was still and very dark; a small rain was falling with a whispering sound, and there was a heavier dripping from the eaves and the mill sails—no other sound from land or sea. But hark! Very faintly came the sound of barking dogs—the great yellow dogs of some distant farm. And whence came yonder sudden flash of light? It was not far out enough for the ships—the treacherous leopards were crouching in darkness—it must shine from the window of that rascally old *chouan* Jacques Martin. Full of the ardour of his dream and without pausing to reflect what domestic reasons Jacques Martin might possibly have for kindling a light at midnight, the Mayor flung on his clothes.

The light shone out thus brightly because a youngish man in a sea-captain's dress took the lamp from Martin's kitchen table and carried it to the deep-embrasured window. He leaned out. Like the Mayor he heard the whisper of the rain and the barking of great dogs; but he heard also the lapping of the immediate sea, and to him the bark of the dogs rang loud and challenging, for they were the big yellow hounds of the neighbouring *château*. In the bare white-washed room behind him a man sat at the table and watched the seaman's back uneasily. He was a grey elderly man, with a round head and a square face, and he wore the Breton costume—the short jacket and round hat with ribbons. He sat there staring, with his pipe between his teeth and cards in his hand, a jug of wine on the table, and the rest of the pack carelessly flung down beside a guttering candle.

'Enough, Captain,' he said at length; 'that window will give me a cold in the head.'

'And if it does?' returned the other without turning round. 'That is not a painful malady.' The seaman spoke French with an accent rather provincial than foreign, for he was a Channel-islander.

There was another pause. Then Martin spoke again.

'Like that the light can be seen a long way off.'

'That is what I want.'

'But look you, Lefroy, if the *douaniers* see it they will ask why it is there.'

'Let them ask. I have several thousand answers for *douaniers*, and all are good.'

Lefroy was placing a three-legged stool on the window-seat and the lamp upon the stool.

'There, Martin! This is a beacon to light the *Sauterelle* home again.'

Martin looked perplexed.

'I thought the *Sauterelle* was in England.'

'So she is. But I have explained to you, haven't I? If we can ship these gentlemen safe to our masters at Tours, and bring them back safe, too, the English Government has engaged to send us back the *Sauterelle*. Yes, Martin, the pretty little *Sauterelle*, the smartest little craft afloat. It's the *Sauterelle* I want, bless her! But you want her cargoes, don't you, comrade? And this one that is to be landed to-night—don't you want it? I can tell you our masters do, and will pay you the biggest rent for your vault there that ever you pocketed in your life.'

As he spoke Martin's disturbed countenance settled into a look of shrewdness; but it was destined to be quickly disturbed again, for a shuffling female tread was heard upon the stairs.

'Ah, here's Madame!' he half-whispered. 'I told you so!'

Lefroy looked round annoyed, alarmed, as the door burst open, and Madame filled the doorway, loose-girt and hurriedly coiffed. Madame was a handsome woman, of a higher social class than her husband, and considerably younger, stout but not yet shapeless.

'What does all this mean, father?' she asked in a fiery voice, pointing to the table and lamp in the open window.

'Ask the Captain, mother,' grumbled Martin, gathered in a defensive heap on his stool, pipe in hand. 'It is the Captain's affair.'

'A fine affair for us all if the gendarmes should see it. They will say we were signalling to the ships down there. Shut the shutters at once, if you please, M. Lefroy.'

But by this time Lefroy had collected himself.

'Pardon, Madame, but we have business in hand to-night which has nothing to do with ladies.'

'Dame, M. Lefroy, if it's something I am not to know about, it's sure to be something silly. Is it some royalist conspiracy you're dabbling in? I should have thought we'd had enough of that in Loheac.'

Lefroy laughed scornfully.

'I thought you knew me better than that, Madame Martin.'

'I know you're an atheist and a republican, but I don't trust you any the more for that. Shut that window, father, and come to bed.'



'No, no, Madame,' interposed Lefroy; 'he can't do that. I am in command for to-night, and I say this window must remain open.'

'A fig for your command!' cried Madame Martin furiously. 'Go and command your precious *Sauterelle*, which, I tell you, is at the bottom of the sea. Shall not a woman be mistress in her own house? Shut me that window, Captain; shut me those shutters, and quickly!'

Lefroy shrugged his shoulders and smiled. With a violent exclamation Madame Martin made for the window. The sea captain was a brave man, but for a moment he quailed; and in that moment she swept him out of her path and seized the lamp with one hand, the casement with the other. But having seized them she stood still and stared into the darkness with starting eyeballs, while the purple flush of her wrath faded to a dull pallor. Lefroy, marking her terror, changed colour himself.

'What is it?' he asked low and sharp, snatching the swaying lamp from her hand. 'Is it the *douaniers*?'

'O mon Dieu!' ejaculated Madame Martin, falling back from the window; 'O mon Dieu, mon Dieu!'

Lefroy thrust his head out, but the light of the lamp fell upon nothing except the rain dimpling pools of its own making, and shining on the patches of short grass. Further off ruinous walls were dimly visible.

'What did you see?' he asked again.

Madame Martin had shut her eyes tight.

'Don't ask me. Oh, how frightened I am! What a pain I have got!'

And as a more elegant female might have pressed a hand upon her heart, Madame Martin clasped both hers to her waist.

'A thousand thunders, Madame Martin! I don't believe you saw anything. At any rate you didn't see *douaniers*.'

'Worse than that.'

'What? Soldiers?'

Madame Martin opened her eyes and almost whispered:

'I saw those who come back.'

Martin crossed himself, and his lips moved in a brief exorcism.

'What were they like?' asked Lefroy, jeering.

'The White Fathers, of course—those the Blues massacred,' returned Martin troubled. 'Shut the window, Lefroy. The White Fathers bode no good.'

Lefroy swallowed a contemptuous oath and jumped out of the window. At first he could see nothing in the darkness, and when he had hurt himself against a bit of ruined wall he stood still, blaspheming in French. But presently he could just perceive the difference between something and nothing, and remembered a doorway to the right of the heap of stones against which he had stumbled. He felt his way through it, but was hardly clear of the jambs when something heavy and enveloping fell over his head and all his body. The cloth, or whatever it might be, was wrapped tightly round him from either side, and while he was struggling in its folds someone, by a deft turn of the leg, threw him on his face, a pair of accomplished hands held him gagged, while a personal weight held down his body.

'Got him, by Gemini!' chuckled an exhilarated and very youthful voice, proceeding from the weight upon him. 'Capital job! What shall we do with him now, sir? Chuck him into the sea?'

'Hardly fair, Jones. He's most likely only some poor devil of a farmer.'

'Not he, sir. Just you take my advice and put him into Davy Jones's locker. That's the only safe place for these fellows.'

Both voices were young, but the one which urged these blood-thirsty counsels still had a crack in it.

'You be hanged, Jones—and you will be some day! Talk of the King's navy, you're only fit for a pirate. Heave up his legs, and help me to carry him round the corner there. We'll just truss him up and leave him.'

To Jones's indignation Lefroy here essayed to utter

'Damn his impudence! Take in another reef in his throat, sir, and no harm if you do throttle him.'

Seizing hold of the living packet, the pair went a little further into the ruined building; but it was very dark, and a sudden drop in the ground, a stagger of the foremost bearer, together with an energetic struggle of the victim's, brought all three violently to earth, though Jones was uppermost in a moment, and the cold point of his dirk, ripping through the canvas, scratched Lefroy's throat.

'Seelongce, cochong,' exclaimed Jones in a low voice.

'Silence yourself, you murdering little devil!' returned Lefroy, still choking. 'It's me—Lefroy,'

'By Gad, so it is! What a fool you were not to say so. But just mind how you speak to an officer in the Royal Navy.'

Lefroy rose from the ground an angry man.

'If it weren't for the *Sauterelle* I'd show you and the Admiral, too, how much I care for the Royal Navy,' and he burst into a passion of English imprecations.

'If you'd spoken like that before,' observed Jones critically, 'we should have known who you were. Why the devil did you swear in French?'

'It was an infernally silly mistake of ours, Captain Lefroy,' apologised Dillon, 'and we ask you a thousand pardons. But how was it you never came aboard?'

'Ay, sir,' said Jones in a subdued but quarterdeck voice, 'how was it you left us fooling about, scraping the boat's nose against every rock in the place, and not so much as showing us your dashed light?'

'The Belle-Ile men wouldn't let me have a boat,' returned Lefroy sullenly, 'and the *douaniers* have got them all chained up fast enough on this side. I lit up as soon as I dare. You wouldn't do for our trade, you Navy lubbers, wanting as many lights to steer by as though you were in the streets of Portsmouth.'

Patrick checked the budding admiral's indignation by holding him fast by the arm, and answered:

'The cutter's not ten minutes' walk from here—under a cliff, not very high, but too steep for the cargo to come up. Mr. Jones and I climbed up to take our bearings.'

'And we hauled up a couple of sails after us,' put in Jones, regaining his good humour at the recollection, 'because the Count said the rustics here were precious superstitious, so I thought they wouldn't interfere with us if they took us for ghosts. When the old lady came to the window—the description was an injustice to Madame Martin—'we'd only just sighted your light, and as I didn't know who she was I thought we'd better treat her to a flap or two. How did it work, eh?'

Lefroy was too sullen to answer.

'Show me where the boat lies, sir, if you've not lost your bearings altogether,' he said to Patrick Dillon, 'and I'll bring her round to her moorings right enough.'

It was not long before Madame Martin found herself alone in the house; and she began to reflect. That Lefroy should go out into the night without fear of the White Fathers was natural, for

he was an atheist ; but what could have induced Martin to do so ? Something more substantial must be afoot than ' those who return.' Could it be that the *Sauterelle* was really back ? If so, how had she slipped in past the English ships, except on sufferance ? Madame Martin had no objection on principle to royalist conspiracies supported by the English, but practically she had had enough of them. After a while she left the bedroom to which Martin had consigned her, and went to the house-door and looked out. The night was still dark, and the space enclosed by the monastery buildings was wide, so that she had rather a vague sense of people stirring there than sight or sound of them ; but she perceived a gleam of light flitting from time to time behind the broken tracery of the tall chapel windows. She lit a lantern, and, holding the light side against her skirt, went to the chapel door. It was nothing new to her to see the large slab which covered the entrance to the burial-vaults lifted. Bits of turf and weed, artistically planted in the crevices, made it look as solid and neglected as the rest of the floor when it was replaced. A light shone up from it, and in the light appeared the great head and shoulders of a man, with his sleeves tucked up and brawny arms folded over his chest. She knew then that the smugglers had somehow brought in a cargo, for it was their custom to store their goods in the vaults where the bodies of departed de Loheacs had once lain, until such time as they could carry them inland. But there was something indefinitely strange to her in the appearance of the man on the stairs of the vault. She retreated a little, and shed the light of her lantern about her, seeking Martin. It fell upon two figures whose apparition gave her a more terrible shock than she had suffered from that of the White Fathers, for they wore the uniform of French officers of the Marine. She gave a scream, faint from excess of fear. Not that she could have sworn to the exact nature of the uniform ; but uniforms of any kind jarred on her nerves. The two officers took off their hats to her, and one of them, a big man, said :

' Good evening, Madame. Do not be frightened ; there is no reason.'

Before she had resolved on an answer the light of her lantern showed a train of men passing by her carrying big bales on their shoulders—brawny men, with hair plastered flat on their foreheads and ruddy wind-beaten countenances. Their dress—loose shirts or jackets, short drawers, or a kind of petticoat instead—did not differentiate them, except by its superior cleanliness, from

the ordinary English 'trader's' crew. But there was a certain orderliness, a certain confident calm, in their expression and movements which made them different. Lefroy walked by them, and she seized him by the arm.

'What does this mean? Who are these people?'

Lefroy answered roughly.

'What! Have you never seen English traders before, Madame Martin?'

'Yes, Lefroy, but I never saw any like these.'

In fact, no one ever had seen before a boat's crew from a British man-of-war storing goods in a French smuggler's cellar. But this was the earnest of the return of the *Sauterelle*. Madame Martin shook her fist at the sailors.

'You rascals! I believe you come from the English ships over there. But I won't let Martin help you to land, not if you bring the King himself with you.'

Lefroy swore impatiently.

'I tell you we're putting the finest lot of goods into Père Martin's cellar that ever it held, and at the least risk. Go to bed!'

The big man took off his hat again and spoke insinuatingly.

'I perfectly understand your anxiety, Madame, and as soon as we have finished our task I will come and explain the affair to you. Meantime, may I ask your charity for this poor boy, who is wet and chilled to the bone? With his delicate constitution I fear for him. If you will make him a fire and dry his clothes the saints will surely reward you for your kindness.'

Patrick was certainly cold, and his transparent complexion, easily affected by changes of temperature, gave some support to d'Haguerty's appeal, his blue eyes and soft voice still more. Madame Martin said it was wicked to bring a delicate boy like that on such an expedition.

'Keep this woman occupied till I come, my boy,' whispered the Count, patting his shoulder, 'or we shall have trouble.'

Accordingly, it was not long before Patrick Dillon was seated in the chimney-corner, dressed in a clean shirt and breeches of Martin's, while his own clothes steamed before the fire. Madame Martin stood over it, coffee-pot in hand.

'You seem too well brought up a young man to be in the company of such as Lefroy,' she was saying.

'Alas! Madame, in these days many of us are obliged to

associate with people born and brought up very differently from ourselves.'

'*Dame*, that is true. My father was Intendant to the Baron de Ferriet de Loheac, and I little thought when I was a girl I should marry Martin. And to think that my sister should have married the Seigneur's own son.'

'If she resembled you, Madame, she deserved to marry a prince.'

'I see you know how to turn a compliment, as the gentlemen used to do when I went to the Château. My sister was much less admired; but she was younger than I was, and accompanied the family in the emigration. It was then, when everything was upside down, that M. Louis de Ferriet married her. But he died soon, leaving her but one son; and though it's a fine name, there's no fortune now, and my sister supports herself and her son and the old Baronne by keeping a pension in Tours and teaching the children of the English. A fine life for a Madame de Ferriet de Loheac! My sister is not so well off as I am, after all.'

Patrick, thus guided, proceeded to sacrifice the absent Madame de Ferriet on the altar of Madame Martin, expressing his conviction of her comparative unworthiness to wear the ennobling name. But while he was plying his wiles in the bailiff's kitchen, Fate, or would-be Fate, was knocking at the gates in the shape of a fierce old Sansculotte Mayor.

(*To be continued.*)

